Man's Grim Justice

My Life Outside the Law

By JACK CALLAHAN

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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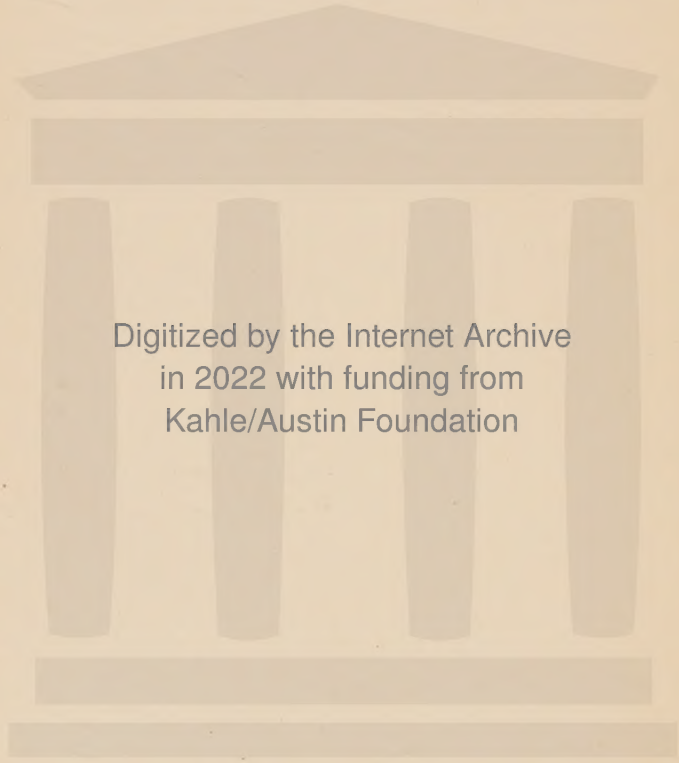
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Man's Grim Justice: *My Life Outside the Law*

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By Jack Callahan

With an Introduction by

CHARLES S. WHITMAN

Ex-Governor of the State of New York and Former
District Attorney of New York

J. H. SEARS & COMPANY, Inc.
Publishers *New York*

MAN'S GRIM JUSTICE

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KINGSPORT PRESS
KINGSPORT, TENNESSEE
United States of America

Dedicated to

The Tannhäuser Overture

INTRODUCTION

I have never met the author and have never before heard of him. The book itself is by no means a literary production. The narration of very dramatic incidents may seem to some at times unconvincing. Whether this particular story, written by a man who signs himself "Jack Callahan," is all fact or not, no one but himself can tell. But my experience with the class he describes assures me that the picture he draws, terrible as it is, is on the whole an accurate one, and that fact in my opinion justifies the publication.

The extent to which the gang spirit pervades the criminal world, and especially its power among young criminals, is in no sense exaggerated. The well-nigh absolute control exerted by environment and circumstances over the conduct of the child and the youth, determining his character and his future, is not over-emphasized.

There is all too much reason to believe that this representation of conditions which have prevailed in many of the penal institutions of our land is not all fiction.

Notwithstanding all the imperfections of law procedure and police systems, and whatever other weaknesses there may be in our methods of law enforcement, the absolute certainty that the criminal "Can't Win" in the end is stressed in every page.

The gang instinct is strong in us all, especially so in youth. The gang spirit is the boy spirit. I am sure that my own experience has been that of public prosecutors generally. It has been a never-failing source of sadness to note the number of young lives ruined by no greater depravity in the first instance than a desire or determination to "stick with the bunch." Many of the crimes of the so-called gunmen (usually mere youths) are committed less for gain than out of a perverted

loyalty to older and more evil men who have twisted the gang instinct of boys into lawless shapes for their own dark, sinister ends. The older criminal will quite often turn State's evidence to save himself where the boy under twenty will refuse. Many an official charged with the enforcement of the criminal law has been heartsick to see the absolute loyalty (a noble quality in itself) exercised by the young lawbreaker toward his pal, a loyalty which will compel him to go to jail or even to death rather than "squeal," a spirit in which one glories when he sees it in his own boy manifested toward his school, his ball team, his friends, his town, his country.

Environment and circumstances determine well-nigh absolutely over what course this instinct shall drive the boy, if we are to believe this story. Conditions into which he was born and under which he lives, not inherited good qualities or innate depravity, control his destiny. Whether he shall be a Boy Scout leader or a hero among pickpockets and worse is decided not by him, but for him. Obviously a remedy is the improvement of conditions. The writer does not attempt to show how, but he does demonstrate that "Silver Alley" is an awful menace to any community.

There is far too much of circumstances and details in respect to names and times and places—corroborated in degree, at least, by some of the appalling disclosures recently made regarding certain prison camps and prison conditions, together with reports and investigations of the National Crime Commission—to permit us as we read this story to solace ourselves with the belief that it is "all made up."

Disagreeable as the narrative is, I hope that this book will be widely read, that it will to some extent, at least, focus public attention on the matters with which it deals. Fiction or fact, many of the conditions described and the characters delineated are essentially true.

Charles S. Whitman

August 8, 1928.

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MAN'S GRIM JUSTICE

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST BREAK

I BEGIN my history, and the first thought that crosses my mind is:

"What a hell of a history this is going to be!"

But I'm going to tell the truth about myself and the world in which I have lived for thirty-odd years regardless of what anybody may say or think about me and my history. The psalm singers and all the rest of the folk who subscribe to the creed that prayer is the panacea for all the ills of the children of the Pit and all the social maladjustments of the world may find many things in my history that are offensive, sacrilegious even, but I can't help it. I have no apologies to offer. I'm not sorry for what I have been. I write as I feel and think, everything that has happened to me as I have passed down the trail of time. All these things are a part of me. They are responsible for what I was and what I am to-day; I am the sum total of my experiences.

I ransack my memory, searching for first definite impressions. Boston, the scene of my birth, stands out in my mind clear-cut and real. I see the poverty-stricken neighborhood in which I was born, the hole in the wall called home, the dingy three-room flat in which nine of us lived, my parents and seven children of whom I was the second.

What a home! There were no electric lights in our flat, no bathtub, no steam heat and very little sunlight because we occupied the apartment on the ground floor in the rear. There was a court in the back of our flat into which the people above us tossed their refuse, such as tomato cans, beer bottles, whisky flasks, old shoes, rags, newspapers and garbage.

On one side of us there was a stable, on the other a lumber yard, and behind us there was a junk yard and a soap factory run by an old Italian. At both ends of Silver Alley there were saloons, joints where the riffraff of the neighborhood gathered for five-cents-a-shot booze and huge schooners of beer and free lunches. I remember the saloons because my Pop made me chase the growler for him many times, over the objections of Mom. Mom called booze of any kind "a curse."

Silver Alley was the dirtiest street I have ever seen and the residents were the dirtiest people I have ever seen. Further, as I look back at it now, it was the dirt and filth that brought on the smallpox epidemic which resulted in the death of my kid sister Alice and my kid brother Tommy.

It was one hell of a neighborhood in which to raise children! It was here that I was born surrounded with dirt, disease, defeat, misery and despair. No kid in this man's world ever came into a uglier environment than I.

But within a stone's throw of this God-forsaken community where men and women and little children lived like cattle there were churches, schools, libraries, clean streets, fine homes, flowers, trees, green grass, song and laughter, where men and women and little children lived like human beings.

I think fear was the first impression that was registered on my mind, fear of the rats that rambled through the dump in which we lived, fear of the brass-buttoned uniforms of the tough Irish cops who chased me off the streets when I played ball, marbles, duck on davy and button, button, who's got the button. There was no other place for me to play, but I guess the cops weren't interested in that. And neither were any of the "public-spirited citizens" so far as I could see.

Then there was another sort of fear, fear of God and hell. This brings my dear old Mom into the picture.

Mom was a great Catholic. The Pope of Rome never had a more devout follower than my mother. Religion was everything in the world to her.

I can almost see her now bending over the washtub, sweating blood so that she could feed and clothe us. At thirty-one she was old from work and worry. The day in and day

out grind broke her, but she smiled and plugged along like a martyr. Regardless of how rough the going was Mom always said:

"It might be worse. Everything that happens, happens for the best."

She was an optimist who believed that "one could always find some sorrow in life over which to be happy."

"It's God's will," she would say. "God's will be done!"

I have seen her go to church when she was hardly able to walk. I have seen her give money to the church when there wasn't enough food in the joint to feed a canary. Whenever I complained that I didn't want to go to church because I was either poorly shod or poorly dressed, she would come back at me with:

"God don't look at your clothes or your shoes, son, he only looks at your soul."

She pictured Heaven, Hell and Purgatory to me. She told me that God had created these places.

"The good boys go to Heaven," she told me, "the bad ones to Hell, where they burn in an everlasting fire."

She told me God knew everything and saw everything and could do everything.

"If you want anything," she told me, "just ask God for it and he'll give it to you."

I believed her; so one day I decided that I was going to pray to God for a pony. I had seen a boy with a pony and cart. I wanted one. I prayed and prayed and prayed, but I didn't get the pony and cart. I asked Mom why God didn't give me that pony and cart. She told me to keep on praying. I did. I prayed for a long time, but the pony never came. Mom said God probably didn't think I should have a pony and cart.

"Guess God thinks you don't need it, son," she said.

I fell for everything that my mother taught me. I fell for everything that the sisters and priests taught me, swallowed all the ideas, hook, line and sinker.

Mom wanted to make a priest out of me. I was an altar boy when I was nine. There was something about the priests and the Mass that got me. I loved it. One day I confessed to my mother that I wanted to be a priest when I grew up

to be a man. I had also told her that I wanted to be a fireman and a cop. I gave up the cop idea when they chased me off the streets; I hated cops!

"Be a priest, Jackie," she would pat me on the head when I gave expression to my preference for the priesthood, "that's the good b'y, God bless ye, me b'y."

Then my father came swaggering into the scene. He was a great father—one of the greatest bums that ever drew the breath of life! He was one of those "give me" boys. He was always after my mother for the price of a growler of beer or a shot of the third-rail booze that the Silver Alley joints peddled. He wouldn't work. He was pickled from morn till night. He put me to work when I was eight, selling papers. He took me out of school.

"He knows too much already," he said to my mother when she protested about taking me out of school.

My mother was frantic. She pleaded with him, but the red-nosed autocrat had his way.

"No more of this damn church and school business," he yelled. "It's the bunk; let him go to work."

My mother threatened to go to the priest, whereupon he beat her unmercifully. If there is such a place over the border as Hell, the Hell about which my mother and the priests raved, I know that he's burning like a pine knot!

I said he never worked. He did work on occasion as a bartender in one of the joints that decorated the neighborhood. He was known as one of the best short-change artists that ever stood behind a bar, so his periods of employment were few and far between. He was also known as one of the best rough-and-tumble, knock-'em-down-and-drag-'em-out bullies that ever rambled over the streets of South Boston. He could lick more cops than any other three men in South Boston and it was while he was engaged in licking a cop one night during a drunken brawl that a cop put an end to his career with a bullet through his brain.

His death prostrated my poor mother, for, regardless of how rotten he had been, she loved him devotedly. But I didn't attach very much importance to his death. He had been a bad father to me, a bad husband to my mother, and so I didn't do any crying. It seemed to me that a very bad man

had gone out of the world and that life—my life and my mother's life and all our lives—was going to be much better now that he had gone.

But before he went he had taught me how to sip beer and whisky. He also taught me how to tap a till (rob a cash drawer), and when he and his pal, "Slow Joe Reilly," got tanked up on booze, they would take me out till-tapping. Joe and my father would start a fight in front of the store, while I dashed in and copped the contents of the cash drawer.

About two months after my father's finish, my older brother Eddie, who was thirteen and the eldest of the seven kids, was ground to pieces while he was hopping freight trains in the New York, New Haven & Hartford railroad yards. Eddie's death nearly killed my mother. What a life she's had! Whenever I hear the holier-than-thou folk rhapsodizing about the all-merciful God, my thoughts go back to my mother and I don't know whether to laugh or cry or blaspheme, for she was on her knees with her back to the wall for twenty-one long, terrible years. On her knees with her back to the wall—until I learned how to plunder banks!

I was twelve when my father died. For three years I worked for a building contractor, doing everything and anything from carrying the hod to mixing mortar. I worked so damn hard that I would fall asleep in the street car on my way home and ride many blocks beyond my destination, and I frequently fell asleep at the table while I was eating my meals.

In the employ of the same firm there was a young fellow with whom I was very friendly, named Dick DeGroot. Dick had a father who was one of the worst petty larceny thieves that ever walked the streets of South Boston. He was doing a life term in the Deer Island Prison on the installment plan. He was in to-day and out to-morrow, in and out for ten or twelve years. He, too, was a rummy who didn't believe in providing for his family. Mrs. DeGroot, like my mother, was one of those women who believed that "everything that happens is for the best," so while Jerry DeGroot stole and drank and languished in prison, she worked like a slave to feed and clothe the ten kids.

One day Dick's uncle, his mother's brother, appeared on

the scene. Dick and I had been pals for about a year before Harry Nash materialized and not once had Dick mentioned his Uncle Harry. Therefore, I was surprised when he introduced me to him.

There was something mysterious about Uncle Harry. I couldn't get him. I was about fourteen when I first met him.

"You never told me you had an Uncle Harry, Dick, did you?" I said to Dick one day.

"I didn't?" I thought he was trying to evade the subject.

"No," I replied, "I never heard of him until you introduced me to him."

"He's awful rich," Dick went on, "got lots of money and he's going to take us out of this house and buy my mother a new one."

"Rich, eh?" I was surprised to hear it. "Where did he get the money?"

"He got it up in the Klondike gold mines," Dick told me. "He's a gold miner."

The next time I met Uncle Harry I observed that he had little, feminine hands, soft and clean, and well-manicured nails. He looked more like a dandy than a miner, and then one day the scandal came out. Harry was a prowler, a house burglar, a knight of the jimmy and skeleton keys; he didn't know any more about picks and shovels, the Klondike gold mines and the wilds of the Northland than I knew about paleontology. He himself broke the news to Dick and me one afternoon at the ball game.

"I'm going to take you kids off that tough job you got and show you how to make real money," he began. "How would you like to make some real money real easy, boys?"

"He ain't a gold miner like I told he was," Dick leaned over and whispered in my ear before I could reply to Uncle Harry's speech. "He's a boiglar, Jackie, he's a boiglar."

"Burglar, burglar," I thought to myself. The word seemed to charm me.

What kid hasn't painted mental pictures of burglars and their hair-raising exploits, and what kid hasn't been dominated by an insane desire to emulate them? I had read my share of Nick Carter, Old Sleuth, Dead Eye Dick and Old King Brady, the celebrated detectives of nickel fiction who

rounded up train robbers, counterfeiters, murderers and burglars, and at one time in my life I was possessed with the ambition to become a detective; the detective, I thought, was a wonderful man. I also was possessed with the ambition to become a fireman whenever I saw the engines go dashing by. I wanted to drive the dashing steeds to the fires. God only knows how many times I longed to become a policeman, but that ambition was destroyed when I got acquainted with cops.

But when Harry Nash suggested the burglarizing game to me I was all attention. Firemen, policemen and detectives were comparatively unimportant persons. The thoughts of having my own jimmy, a black mask and a bull's-eye lantern with which I could prowl through the rooms of magnificent mansions, picking up jewels and swag, captivated me.

"I'd love to be a burglar," I told Uncle Harry.

"Me, too," Dick boasted. "I've always wanted to be a boiglar, Uncle Harry."

"Sure of that?" Harry went on. "Sure y' won't be sorry if I take y's out wid me?"

"Not a chance, not a chance," I assured him.

"All right," Harry said, "we'll talk it over after the game."

After the game he discussed the "racket" with us and told us what we would have to do.

"To-morrow morning," he began, "go out to Brookline where all the rich people live and get me a list of three or four big houses that are empty for the summer. Bring me the numbers of the houses and the names of the streets that they are on and the names of the people that lives in them in the winter and the business of the man."

He explained that he wanted all this information so that he would know that he wasn't going into the home of somebody that wasn't extremely wealthy, and when I asked him why he wanted to rob houses that were temporarily vacated he replied:

"In those sloughs [vacated houses] we always find a lot of jewelry, silverware, gold plate, and them things is just as good as money."

I thought Harry was a great crook at that time. I had

never admired a fireman or a policeman or a detective as I did him.

But once again I got to thinking about my mother. What was I to say to her? If I went with Harry I had to give up my job with the contractor and I didn't know how I was going to explain that to Mom. I didn't know what to do, so I appealed to Harry for advice. He solved the problem immediately.

"Here," he handed me a brand new ten-dollar note, "give this to your mother. Tell her you're working for me. Let's see," he appeared to be in deep thought. "Tell her," he went on, "that I'm going into the gardening game, fixing lawns and trees and flower beds for all the rich people in Brookline and that you and Dick are my helpers; she'll fall fer that line."

Sure enough Mom did fall. I was earning four dollars a week with the contractor, working ten and twelve hours a day and when I told Mom that I would only have to work four hours a day with Harry and that he would pay me ten dollars a week she was tickled.

"Ah," she smiled, "that's fine, Jackie. Some day you may be able to buy me a nice sealskin coat, won't you?"

Mom was always raving about a sealskin coat and I intended to buy that coat for her some day.

So out I went to master the details of burglarizing "sloughs."

Right and wrong, sin, Heaven and Hell and Purgatory were forgotten. I had sidetracked all that the priests and the sisters and my mother had taught me. I had discarded the idea of becoming a priest. The life of a burglar, I was sure, was infinitely more romantic.

Dick DeGroot and I sauntered into the aristocratic Brookline section. It was midsummer. All the rich people were out of town at the seashore or the mountains and all the magnificent homes were boarded up front and rear. Dick and I jotted down the addresses, made notes on location, after which we made discreet inquiries ascertaining the business of the masters to whom these palaces belonged. Harry was delighted with our work. He scanned the notes eagerly and then patted us affectionately.

"Fine," he smiled, "great. You'se kids are A-No. 1, high-grade scouts, and I'll think y'se will make a couple of good burglars."

My chest expanded. I was spellbound with wonder and admiration for this wonderful burglar who told me that I was the goods, "an A-No. 1, high-grade scout."

"Why this fellow," I thought, "is the goods. He's smarter than any of the priests, and a lot braver than any of the cops or firemen or detectives."

He was the nearest thing to a god that I had ever seen and I was bowled over with the idea that a first-class burglar was about the last word in achievement. I was determined to become a first-class burglar. Visions of the James boys, Black Bart, the Daltons and other notorious characters of the high country and the plains whirled in my disordered brain.

"By God," I decided, "that's the life for me; to hell with the contractor's job and every other kind of hard labor!"

But above all I thought of my mother and what I would do for her when I became a rambler of the underworld trails. And I thought of my kid sisters and brothers. I had planned what I was going to do with all the money I got. I would take my mother away from that damn washtub and set her up in a fine home somewhere. I'd get her that sealskin coat, a new bonnet and a new black silk dress. Mom was always shabby looking, raggedy and unhappy.

"By God," I swore, "I'll attend to Mom when I get my hands on a big chunk of dough. I'll get her the sealskin coat, the bonnet and the black silk dress. I'll make all the Irish in Silver Alley turn green with envy."

I would send my kid sisters and brothers to a private school. I would have the neighbors talking about what a fine little man Jackie Callahan turned out to be and I had a hunch that this chatter of the over-the-back-yard-fence spell-binders would please Mom immensely. I was determined to make all these dreams come true, so I hit the underworld pike with a crash!

"To-night," Harry Nash told Dick and me, "we'll knock off Martin's home."

Martin was one of the prominent bankers of the City of Culture. He had a castle that stood on the corner of two

of the principal streets of Brookline. We boarded a street car and went to the home of the millionaire. It was a fine night for a burglary. A light rain was floating down when we started for Brookline, but before we arrived there it had developed into a deluge. The thunder roared while blue-white flashes of lightning cracked and snapped and zigzagged across an almost jet black sky. I was just a little bit nervous and for the first time it dawned on me that burglars had to have a lot of nerve. Dick and I led the way to Martin's big house. We went to the rear and jumped the fence. I was on the verge of turning back. I wanted to run and yet I wanted to go through with this business. Then my mind took an uncomfortable turn. I thought of Mom, the priests, the sisters and what they had told me about Heaven and Hell and God.

Harry started to jimmy open the back door. Dick and I stood off to the side watching him. Again I wanted to run like hell, but somehow or other I couldn't get going.

"God damn it," Harry was cursing because he couldn't crash in the door.

Now and then I was looking at the fence that we had just climbed over. Momentarily I expected to see about twenty-five cops coming over the fence. I sure was afraid of the cops. I couldn't think of anything but cops.

"How do y' feel?" Dick spoke to me.

"How do you feel?" My teeth were chattering.

"Not so good, Jackie," his voice was trembling. "I ain't feeling a bit good."

"And I'm not feeling so good, Dick, I'll tell the world I'm not." I thought I was going to be sick.

Presently my knees began to knock. I was getting worse by the second and then I just automatically began to mumble a prayer:

"Hail Mary full of Grace the Lord is with thee blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus——"

"Say, say," Harry heard the prayer, "what the hell's coming off here, anyway? What's y' doing, saying yer prayers?"

"What's the matter, Jackie?" Dick began to act like a soldier, "y' ain't afraid, are y'?"

"Prayers?" I began to stiffen up and act the lion. "Where do you get that prayer stuff? I ain't praying."

"Well, by God," Harry got up off his knees in front of the door, "I thought I was at the Salvation Army; a hell of a fine burglar y'll make, believe me, kid, and if yer scared, beat it."

"Scared?" Harry's accusation humiliated me. "Who said I was scared, who said it?"

The accusation made me forget all about fear. I no longer trembled. My voice was even and steady and my knees had stopped knocking.

"Now, listen, Jackie," Harry came over to me and flashed his bull's-eye lantern in my face, "if yer scared, beat it and you, too, Dick, fer I don't want you kids to faint on my hands when we git in this joint."

"I'm not going to faint. Whataya think I am?" Dick said.

"And neither am I. Get that door open and let's get inside; I'm soaking wet," I grunted defiantly.

Harry went back to the door mumbling:

"A hell of a fine pair of burglars you guys'll make."

Presently he got the door open.

"Come on, come on."

Dick and I followed him into the kitchen. He shut the door and then he put a chair up under the door knob.

"Now watch your step and don't make any noise," he said.

He led the way into a room, where I fell over a chair.

"Holy Jesus," he hissed, "didn't I tell y' to watch yer step?"

Then Dick bumped into a chair and once again Harry let go an oath.

By this time I was paralyzed with fright. My mouth was parched, my tongue was dry and stiff, and I was shaking worse than ever.

"Where are y', Jackie?" Dick spoke.

"Here," I replied; "where are you?"

"I'm here, where are you, Jackie?" Dick's voice was husky.

"Cut the rag chewing, will y'?" Harry barked at us. "And come on."

Dick managed to locate me in the dark and when he came

over to where I was he was quivering like a can-can dancer.

"Gosh! I wish I was out of this," Dick said.

"Don't lose your nerve, we'll be out soon." I grabbed his hand and led the way after Harry.

We cleaned up the dining room, packing all the silverware into a bag—knives, forks, plates, clocks, everything that Harry handed to us. Then we went upstairs to the bedrooms, where we got some jewelry, watches and rings, and about thirty dollars in cash. I certainly heaved a sigh of relief when Harry said:

"Well, I guess we got all of it; now let's beat it."

In my anxiety to get started I tumbled over another chair and Dick stumbled over me. Harry hurled another oath at us and when I stumbled again at the head of the stairs and rolled halfway down, he snarled:

"Some burglars, some burglars. If this wasn't a slough you guys would have woke up everybody in the joint."

"Dere's nothing to be scared about, Jackie,"—Dick's teeth were chattering,—"take yer time, take yer time."

Dick was trying to make his Uncle Harry believe that he wasn't scared, but I knew that he was just as scared as I and his pretending made me sore. When we got downstairs I thought I heard a noise in the parlor.

"What's that?" I stopped and peered into the dark room, while my heart began to pound like a trip hammer. I was positive that I had heard footsteps on the floor. I was positive that I heard the floor creaking. I had visions of cops again. I blessed myself: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and——"

"Praying again, eh?" Harry swore, grabbed me by the neck and shoved me toward the kitchen. "Go on," he grunted, "beat it or you'll have me seeing things."

The big moment came when we finally got to the kitchen on our way out of the house. Harry suddenly stopped us and whispered: "Wait a minute." Simultaneously I distinctly heard somebody walking outside on the gravel path.

"Is it cops?" Dick's body was trembling up against mine. "Think it's the cops?"

The suggestion paralyzed me. Once more I began to mutter a prayer. I nearly collapsed when I heard somebody com-

ing up the steps outside. Harry stood up against the kitchen door with his gun in his hand. Presently the door knob rattled and then I heard the person going down the steps again.

"Night watchman trying the doors," Harry whispered. "Keep still; don't move."

I was wringing wet with perspiration. I couldn't have moved even if I had wanted to move. I was glued to the floor and finally I got so weak that I just dropped. The valiant Dick also sat down. He was still shaking and his teeth were still chattering like mad and when he tried to speak to me I couldn't understand what he said because his voice was so wobbly. There we sat until Harry muttered:

"Come on, he's gone."

When we got outside I wanted to run. It seemed to me that I could have run a hundred miles without stopping. This burglar business was not the cake walk I had pictured it to be and I had just about reached the conclusion that I was not cut out for a "prowler."

Harry told me to carry the swag. I threw the bag over my shoulders.

"You'll be all right after y've been out a couple of times," he said. "I was just like you kids when I first went out on a job, but, by God, Jackie, yer the first burglar that I ever heard say his prayers."

We scaled the fence in the rear of the mansion and started across the lawn of another home toward the street when suddenly I heard: "Halt, throw up your hands; don't move, or I'll shoot."

The bag of plunder just automatically dropped off my shoulders and I tore over the lawn like a race horse, while the watchman who had ordered us to throw up our hands blazed away at us. I never knew that I could run so fast. Harry and Dick were right at my heels. Harry had picked up the bag of plunder when I dropped it, and when we finally got away what he said to me about dropping the bag wouldn't look well in print.

"No more of this 'prowling' business for me," I told him. "It's too much for me; I'd rather carry the hod and mix mortar."

But I forgot all about the terrible night that I had lived through when Harry gave me fifty dollars the next day for my share of the loot. Fifty dollars! This was a staggering sum of money. I had never seen so much money, and I felt like a millionaire.

"Holy smokes," I thought, "I guess I can take another crack at the business for fifty dollars."

I gave Mom half of the fifty. She was elated. Then I proceeded to have a swell time with the balance of the money. I went to burlesque shows, ball games, prize fights. I gorged myself on ice cream sodas, cinnamon buns, pies, all day suckers, gum drops, jaw breakers and cigarettes. Life was pitched high; it had never been so wonderful. Policemen, firemen, detectives, priests and ministers, I thought, were saps, simps, pikers. The kids who worked for a living were suckers. Anybody that worked for a living was a boob; burglars were the salt of the earth.

The next time I went out with Harry I wasn't quite so nervous. I didn't pray so fervently and neither did my knees knock so violently. I got through the second job much better than the first one and so did Dick. As time rolled along the fear wore off and I finally got to the stage of the game where I could jimmy a door and prowl a house without stumbling over chairs, tables and rugs. I got an awful kick out of creeping through a house with a flash light in my hand, but I got a bigger kick when I went home to Mom with money. I think she had an idea that all wasn't well with me, that I wasn't getting all this money legitimately, though she never directly accused me of stealing.

"Don't forget your duties," she preached night and day; "nobody can have any luck, Jackie, if they don't attend to their duties."

"Duties," was Mom's term for attending Mass, receiving communion, praying and confessing.

After about six months with Harry, Dick and I went out on our own hook. We thought he was short-changing us on the proceeds of the hauls. He never gave us over fifty dollars for our end and when we demanded an even split he laughed at us and told us that he had taught us what we knew and that we weren't entitled to an even split.

"Yer only apprentices," he howled, "y' haven't learned the trade yet. Y' got to work with me two years before I'll split the dough three ways."

We struck! We quit him cold and went out to carve our own careers.

We went tapping tills and the first till we tapped in a baker shop the big Dutch baker grabbed us by the neck and hauled us off to the police station. Now I was frightened out of my wits. This was the first arrest. I was broken-hearted, sick, despondent, and all the underworld aspirations were dynamited sky high. Prison loomed up before me fearfully and I thought with regret of that job with the contractor, even with all the hard work and only four dollars a week.

CHAPTER II

THE REFORM SCHOOL

"A TILL tapper, eh?" A big, red-faced Irish cop glared at me over the top of the desk when the Dutch baker dragged me into the police station. "Yer starting in young, ain't you? What's yer name?"

"Jackie Callahan's me name," I cried.

"'Tis a damn foine name y' have," he said, "and it's too bad that anybody wid a name loike that should be a thief."

After he had "booked" me (put down my name and address) he called another big, red-faced "chaw" and told him to lock me up.

The cop threw Dick and me into a huge cell in which three or four drunks were stretched out on the floor, singing and cursing, while five or six other men, some of whom had been arrested for vagrancy and other minor offenses, were pacing up and down the cell like animals in a cage at the Zoo.

"Ha," they greeted us with laughter, "a couple of kid burglars. Whatchya in for, kids?"

Dick and I were too miserable to talk with them; all we could do was cry and the more we cried the more these men joshed us. This cell was an incredibly dirty place. There was absolutely no ventilation in it—no windows, no light other than a single gas jet which burned day and night. The atmosphere of the place was nauseating, sickening; the stench of alcohol exhaled by the gaping mouths of the bums stretched out on the floor, together with the revolting odor which came from the slop pails which were emptied twice a day and the feculence of all those dirty, sweaty, vermin-ridden bodies, would have turned the stomach of a pig. Sleep was out of the question, but the bums snored all night long and scratched all night long and before morning I was scratching; the vermin had landed on my body in droves. I had never had any of them on me before that night and I didn't know what

was wrong when I began to scratch and itch all over.

"Kid, yer crummy," one of the tramps said to me the next morning.

"Crummy?" I said. "What's that?"

"Yer lousy," he roared, "lousy; the seam squirrels are rambling up and down yer back."

"Look at 'im scratch," others shouted, "catch 'em, kid, catch 'em and kill 'em."

The night I spent in that police station is still fresh in my memory and the experience in court still lives with me as though it happened only a few days ago instead of about twenty-two years back.

I was taken before the Judge.

The court room was jammed, but the first person my eyes lighted upon when I entered was my mother, sitting over in a corner with Father Reilly, one of the parish priests. The tears were streaming down her face. Her eyes were bloodshot from crying and she looked more wretched and miserable than ever before.

Then the clerk called my name. My mother and Father Reilly got up and moved over to a seat in front of the Judge's bench. The big Dutch baker came swaggering up the aisle, followed by the policeman who patrolled the beat upon which I lived and upon which the baker shop was located where Dick and I had tapped the till.

The prosecuting attorney handed the Judge a paper, after which they held a whispered conversation for a few minutes. Then he, the Judge, called me.

"Stand up," he said.

I stood up, shivering.

"Is this boy's father here?" he grunted.

Father Reilly answered the question.

"His father is dead, but his mother's here, Your Honor."

My mother stood up beside Father Reilly.

"How old is the boy, Mrs. Callahan?"

"Not quite fifteen, sir," my mother said, "and he's a good boy, Judge, Your Honor."

"A good boy?" The Judge looked at my mother over the top of his spectacles. "From what I've heard of him, he's a bad boy and has always been a bad boy."

"I've known the youngster all his life," Father Reilly began to talk, "and he's been a typical boy, neither very good nor very bad, just a boy. I——"

"Ever been arrested before?" the Judge interrupted the priest.

"No, I don't think he has," Father Reilly said. "I think this is the first time he's ever been arrested."

"Your Honor," the prosecutor got up, "the officer on the beat where this boy lives tells me that he has had a lot of trouble with the gang that he travels with and——"

"Where's the officer," the Judge interrupted the prosecutor.

The cop came forward.

"What do you know about this young man?" His Honor asked Dan.

"He's a wild one, he is, Your Honor," the big cop began to denounce me. " 'Tis a rough crowd he travels with in Silver Alley. They are always up to some mischief or other, throwing stones at Chinamen, breaking windows, fighting and raising the divil generally, and he's a little divil himself."

"I think the reform school is the place for this boy," His Honor declared; "a term in the reform school will do him more good than harm. He's at the age when he requires a lot of discipline and if he doesn't get it now he's liable to develop into a crook of the worst sort. I——"

"Judge, Your Honor, please don't send him to the reform school," my mother screamed. "He's not a bad boy and I know that he'll be a good boy after this."

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Callahan," the Judge went on, "but the law must be upheld and your son must be taught a lesson. He has had the benefit of a good home training, religious instruction by the priests and yet he is wild and incorrigible, and it seems to me that a term in the reform school will do him more good than harm. You must understand, my dear lady, that this is by no means a pleasant duty to me, that I sympathize with you and that my sympathies are with your son; but I cannot allow my sympathies to obscure judgment in such a case. It is clearly evident to me that the boy needs discipline; therefore, much as I regret it, I must commit him to the reform school."

Then he directed a few remarks to me. He told me that

I had been a bad boy, that he hoped the reform school would change my viewpoint and that he was sure it would if I had the "right sort of stuff" in me.

"I hope," he concluded, "when you are released that you will come out into the world determined to be an honest, clean-living, substantial citizen."

It required the combined strength of two big cops to tear me away from my mother when the Judge pronounced sentence. I fought and kicked and cried like a maniac, but they finally got me back to the cell where the cops began to enumerate all the advantages of the reform school.

"Don't cry, Jackie," they pleaded with me, "y'll be all right in the reform school."

My mother stood close by, sobbing broken-heartedly, and I recall my saying to her:

"Don't cry, Mom, don't cry. I did it for you, Mom. I wanted to take you away from that washtub and buy you that sealskin coat."

"Glory be to God," my mother sighed, "you did it for me? Glory be to God," she repeated, "the officers will be thinking that I sent you out to steal."

"Oh, don't worry, Mrs. Callahan," the cop tried to console my mother, "he'll be all right in the reform school. It ain't a bad place, Mrs. Callahan. They treat the boys all right up there and Jackie'll be all right if he behaves hisself. Why, they'll teach him a trade and everything there."

"They'll teach him a trade?" My mother stopped crying. "Do you hear what the officer says, son?" she said to me. "He says they'll teach you a trade in the reform school—well, that's not so bad if they do that, Jackie."

"They play baseball up there in the summer time," the cop continued to spread the salve; "in the winter time they play basket ball in the gymnasium. They got a library and everything."

"Well—now that's fine." My mother's face lighted up with a smile. "It can't be such a bad place after all, if they do all those things up there."

The cop's picture of the reform school cheered me up a little and I stopped crying. I had an entirely different impression of reform schools. I had visions of striped suits,

dark cells, dungeons, hard work, brutal punishments and poor food.

"Do they let the boys go to church?" my mother asked the cop.

"Why, sure they do, Mrs. Callahan," he replied, "they got a rabbi up there and a Catholic priest."

"They have?" A look of astonishment spread over my mother's face. "Then he can go to Mass?"

"Sure he can, sure he can," the cop declared. "Every Sunday."

"Well, that's foine," my mother exclaimed, "that's foine."

"The chaplain's a Catholic," the cop went on; "his name's Father McCarty."

"Thanks be to God for that," my mother sighed; "he'll be able to attend to his duties."

And so I went to the reform school to be reformed, taught a trade and educated. I laugh when I think of it! Reformed, taught a trade, and educated! I soon learned that the reform school was nothing like the cop's picture of it.

The first thing that they did with me was to instill fear in my mind. The belief of every officer in the joint was that there was no possibility of reforming me until they had first broken my spirit.

"Break 'em; then y' can make 'em eat out of the hand," I heard the superintendent say a thousand times.

So they proceeded to break me before I had been in the place twenty-four hours. I'll never forget the first night I spent there. They shaved my head and gave me a suit of gray and blue clothes. Then they gave me a lecture on obedience which was punctuated with oaths and references to the different kinds of punishment they resorted to if I didn't walk the chalked line.

The first day had to be spent in solitary confinement. The purpose of the twenty-fours in solitary, so they told me, was to make me think, to impress upon me where I was and to convince me "that life in a reform school was not all peaches and cream."

"Let this be your guide when y' come out of solitary tomorrow"—the superintendent handed me a Bible—"read that and y' won't have very much trouble with us officers."

I was scared when they locked me in the solitary cell. It wasn't so bad while the sun was shining, while I could see; but when night came a wave of terror swept over me and I just couldn't keep from crying. There was a night guard on duty whom the boys had christened, "Paddy the Rough." I asked him if he wouldn't please take me out of the cell and put me into one of the big dormitories where I could talk with some of the boys. I told him I was lonely and cold.

"Y'll be all right there until morning," he replied; "all the b'ys have to spend the first night in solitary; don't bother me, go to sleep."

"I can't sleep," I began to scream; "please take me out of this cell and put me in the dormitories."

"If y' don't stop that blabbering," he roared at me, "I'll take y' out of there and lock y' up in one of the dungeons; go to sleep, God damn it, go to sleep."

"Please," I begged him.

"Cut it out, cut it out or I'll slough [lock] y' in the dungeon."

He scared me. I stopped crying and threw myself on the cot. I was afraid of "Paddy the Rough." Everybody in the place, I subsequently learned, was afraid of "Paddy the Rough," but later on in the night when I got to thinking about Mom, my kid sisters and brothers, I lost all control over myself and went into another paroxysm of grief.

"Well, you God damn baby," Paddy came dashing up to my cell, "I'll give y' something to cry about right now." He unlocked the cell door, came in, grabbed me by the neck and dragged me down the corridor to one of the dungeons and tossed me into it like a sack of oats. "Now cry all y' want to, y' bastard." He slammed the door.

It was pitch dark in the dungeon. I couldn't see my hand when I put it up against my face. I screamed and pounded on the door, but "Paddy the Rough" never gave me a tumble and later on I learned why. One could pound and scream as violently as possible yet not a sound could be heard on the other side of the door. I pounded and screamed until I was exhausted and then I dropped to the floor and slept until they let me out in the morning.

They starved and flogged me because I cried. They pro-

nounced me incorrigible because I wouldn't stop crying. The first five days I spent in the school they gave me a bread and water diet and on an average of twice a day they flogged me with a paddle on the bare hide, flogged so mercilessly that I wasn't able to sit in a chair for a week or ten days after.

The dungeon siege, the bread and water diet and the flogging for the first five days was a course to which every new arrival was subjected for the perfectly humanitarian purpose of "breaking the spirit" of the "incorrigible kids." The fact that the kid had been sent to the reform school meant but one thing to the degenerate minds of the brutal keepers, and that was that the kid was bad, tricky, treacherous, mean, and therefore in need of punishment and discipline.

"Terrorize 'em," the superintendent used to say; "make 'em crawl and then y' can make 'em eat out of the hand."

Very few men who have been subjected to the cruelties that I have in prisons and the reform school have been able to tell the story of just how they reacted to these brutalities. Invariably the story is told to a collaborator who paints the picture in his own language with the result that the drama and the psychology of the matter is entirely lost. This is my story in my own language.

They gave me, I repeat, the five-day dungeon, bread and water and flogging siege to break my spirit. But it didn't break me. It had the opposite effect on me after I had had it a few times. The first time, to be sure, it worried me a little, scared me. The second time I was not quite so much worried or scared and on the third occasion I substituted curses for prayers. I didn't cry. I wasn't scared. Instead of breaking my heart it hardened my heart. I wasn't "incorrigible" when they flogged, starved and caged me up the first time, but after the third dose I was toughened.

The reform school gave me a marvelously thorough education in criminality. What I didn't know about the various underworld "rackets" when I landed there, I learned after I had been caged up a year. I learned how to pick a pocket, crack a safe, nick a watch, pick a lock and make a skeleton key; I waded right through the curriculum of crime with honors and then for the purpose of convincing my associates, my mentors, that I was an apt pupil and a smart guy,

I would go up to a keeper and engage him in conversation while I nicked his purse out of his pocket.

One day a keeper saw me picking the superintendent's pocket.

"Well, I'll be damned," he gasped, "what tha hell do y' think of that."

For this unprecedented crime I was doomed to the dungeon for ten days on bread and water in addition to having "twenty-five licks" on my bare hide.

The chaplain never visited me while I was in the dungeon, but whenever I came out of the hole he invariably made an effort to get me "to attend to my duties." I had long since passed the stage of the game where prayers, confession, communion, God, Heaven or Hell meant anything to me. I was too tough for any sort of religious exercises, unresponsive. I was hardened; the reform school had failed to reform me!

In time, two years to be exact, I became the bully of the institution. "Toughest guy in the joint" was what the boys called me and I was very proud of that title. Now the dungeon didn't mean a thing to me, didn't represent a thing to me. In the vernacular of the institution I had the dungeon on the hip. I had conquered it. It didn't scare me and I could spend one day or a hundred and one in it and come out laughing. They could flog me all day long and all night long and I'd never "bat an eye"—wouldn't even grunt.

"Wait until I get out of this joint," was my never ending thought. "When I get out of this joint, I'll make somebody pay for this."

The superintendent finally got tired of punishing me, so he tried to talk me into being a good boy. He saw that the hellish racket he had been handing me didn't seem to make me eat out of anybody's hand. It had worked with a lot of boys, but it didn't work with me. And right here I want to say that ninety per cent of the boys whom he "broke" turned out to be coke fiends, petty larceny thieves who would steal a doormat, white slave dealers and murdering gangsters. Men who can be "broke" invariably develop into the scum of the underworld pit. They didn't "break" me and I never became a rat. I was always looking up and reaching out in the years that

followed because I had the guts, and if I hadn't had them I certainly wouldn't be writing my story to-day.

The superintendent couldn't "break" me and he couldn't do anything with me after he had failed to "break" me, so he finally turned me out. He said that I was a God damn nuisance, that he didn't want me in the place, that I kept it in an uproar from morn till night and the last thing I did when he walked with me to the big gate was to kick him in the shins and shout as I dashed down the road:

"Y' didn't make me eat out of the hand, y' big bum, did y'?"

CHAPTER III

HITTING NEW YORK

TWO New York boys were released from the reform school on the same day that the superintendent kicked me out. One of them, "Harlem Benny Pearstein," was a pickpocket. The other, "East Side Johnny Mulcahey," was recognized as one of the best stone-getters that ever nicked a diamond out of a necktie. Benny and Johnny proposed that I join them and go to New York with them.

"We'll work the subway rattlers," Johnny said, "and we'll make all kinds of dough. Them subway rattlers [trains] are fine pickings, and when we git a bank roll we'll take a trip over to Europe."

I had heard a lot about the New York underworld while I was in the reform school. And I had heard a lot about the New York crooks. The New York crooks were supposed to be the cleverest thieves in the world.

"Y'll never be a regular grifter, Jackie," Harlem Benny told me a hundred times, "until y' git to New Yawk and ramble wit' the New Yawk grifters."

"Dese mugs from Boston and Phila and Cheecargo ain't grifters," Johnny argued, "dey're just eighteen-carat-ham-fatters, finks, 'heads-I-win-and-tails-you-lose' guys. Y' got to ramble over the big town before yer aces high in the underworld, Jackie."

It was in the reform school that I first heard of drug users, "coke blowers," and "pipe smokers" and "hypo's." The "coke blowers" I learned were the boys who sniffed cocaine. "The pipe smokers" were the boys who lay around the little red lamp and inhaled the opium through a long bamboo-stemmed pipe, while the "hypo's" were the boys who injected the morphine into different parts of their bodies with the hypodermic needle. I got the impression from what I heard in the reform school that all first-class thieves were drug-users, that a crook

wasn't a regular hard-boiled underworld dangler unless he was addicted to drugs in some way or other.

It seemed to me that I had all the qualifications necessary to the making of a first-class crook.

"I've got nerve," I mused, "I'm not afraid of cops or prisons, I can use a jimmy and a gun; all I'll have to learn now is how to use drugs."

And so when Benny and Johnny and I arrived in New York City, I was all set for any proposition that they might make.

"I'll show these New York mugs that I'm a regular fellow," I thought.

I was determined to rise to the top of Subterranea. I wanted to be an underworld celebrity and not just a plain two-for-a-nickel thief. In other words, I desired to be a leader and throughout the fifteen years that I lived in the crime world the ambition to be a top notcher never deserted me. I always wanted to be the boss, the king pin, the director. I emphasize this disposition chiefly because of the fact that it was this same ambition that led me back to the so-called "straight and narrow."

Now I go back to the New York underworld. When Benny, Johnny and I stepped off the train in the Grand Central Station we dove into the subway "to work."

"On our way down town," Benny said, "we might as well do a little 'rooting,' git a few leathers, a stone or two, and then we can lay off for a few days and 'kick the old gong around.'"

"Kick the old gong around" was the vernacular for smoking the opium pipe.

And on the way down to the joints which, at that time, were located along East Fourteenth Street, Benny "nailed two pokes" (pocket books) while Johnny "copped a two carat stone." The two pokes contained a hundred and fifty bucks and the stone brought seventy-five dollars from a crooked pawnbroker with whom the gang did business.

I had learned how to "nail a poke" while I was in the reform school, but getting a stone, a diamond, out of the tie of a sucker was something new to me, and I looked on with admiring eyes while Johnny was getting that stone. The

subway train was crowded. We went through the train from one car to another until we spied a little fat Jewish gentleman standing on the platform. He had a stone in his tie. Johnny halted Benny and me.

"You git in the back of him, Jackie," Johnny instructed us, "and you git on the right side of him, Benny, and when I cough both of y' bump into him."

Then Johnny opened up his newspaper and got right in front of the Jewish gentleman with the two carat diamond in his necktie. He pretended that he was reading the paper. He manipulated the paper until he finally got it up under the chin of the victim and then he coughed. Benny and I bumped into him. He turned his head. When he turned his head, Johnny's hand, which was hidden under the paper, had lifted the stone out of the tie.

"Excuse me, mister," Johnny spoke to him as the diamond was lifted out of the tie and rolled down the folded paper into Johnny's hands.

The victim smiled and then we beat it up to the car ahead and got off at the next stop.

Within ten or fifteen minutes we had collected $225, which was "split three ways."

The first thing we did was "rag up." The prison clothes didn't look so good, so we each spent about one third of our first subway haul investing in new outfits.

Then to the "pipe joint."

In those days certain "pipe joints" catered to certain classes of crooks. "Hustlers" and their "pimps," shoplifters, "dips," badger game workers, blackmailers and other small-time grifters had their particular pipe joint where they kicked the gong around, while forgers, stick-up men, prowlers, sneak thieves, gamblers and other crooks had their favorite joints. Every particular kind of thief went to a certain place. In other words, there were class distinctions in the opium-smoking world. A "dip," a pimp, a hustler (street walker), a badger game worker, or a blackmailer, couldn't get into the "pipe joint" that the gamblers and the forgers and the stick-up men frequented, and nobody at all could get into any of the "pipe joints" unless the "Chinks" knew them. If you were not known to the "Chinks" and you applied for admission, the

best you could get from the "Chink" on the door would be: "No savvy."

The joint where we smoked was at Number 20 Bowery and was run by a Chinaman called Tom Quong. I'll never forget the first time I went to Tom Quong's place. All I could think of was how the stuff was going to affect me. Benny and Johnny, though they were only nineteen, approximately a year and a half older than I, knew all about the business of smoking. Benny's father was a well-known New York crook. His mother had been a noted shoplifter, one of his sisters was a shoplifter, while his eldest brother, Sammy Pearstein, was a crooked, sure-thing, heads-I-win-and-tails-you-lose card man. The old man was an old smoker with a fierce habit. When I first heard the expression "fierce habit," I didn't know what it meant, but later on I got it. "A fierce habit" meant that a fellow had an appetite for opium and the pipe that couldn't be broken. It meant that he had been up against the stem (pipe) for a long time. Benny's father, I learned, had been up against the stem for fifteen years. His brother Sammy had been kicking the gong around for ten years, while Benny had his first pill as a kid of fifteen; furthermore Benny was a "chef." He could "cook" like an expert and this was considered a rare accomplishment, for very few hop fiends are able to cook the little balls of opium over the peanut oil lamp.

There was no more picturesque hop joint in Chinatown than Tom Quong's. There were three entrances, one from a cellar next door, under the grocery store of Sam Low, one from another Chink joint in the rear and one from a blind alley which ran along the side of the joint. At all three of these entrances Chinks were stationed night and day. Tom Quong's was never closed. All three doors were of heavy oak and all of them were securely barred. At the top of each and every door there was a small sliding panel through which the Chink on guard peered when you gave the high sign, which was three knocks, and the Chink expression "Yen she qua."

Daylight never entered Tom Quong's hop joint. The windows were covered with heavy chintz drapes and the shutters were always closed. The floors of the three rooms were deco-

rated with huge oriental rugs, while little fancy-looking Chinese lamps adorned the walls here and there. Along the sides of the rooms there were bunks in which parties of two took the long draws (inhaled the opium pills), while parties of three and four stretched out on the floors. The only member of the party that used a pillow was the "chef." The others rested their heads on the thighs of their companions.

The scum of the New York underworld was well represented the first night I visited Tom Quong's with Benny and Johnny. Benny and Johnny knew practically everybody in the place and the Americanized Chinks who served the paraphernalia—the hop, pipe, yen hawk (the little instrument with which the opium pill is rolled on the bowl of the pipe and cooked) and lamp—greeted Benny and Johnny as though they were old-time pals.

When we stretched out on the floor Benny began to give me all sorts of advice while he prepared to cook the hop.

"Keep still, Jackie, and don't move around or y'll be sick," he said. "Y' won't get sick if y' keep still and about four pills will give y' a fine jag."

"Sick," I managed to stutter; "will I get sick?"

"Y'll croak," Johnny shouted, "if y' don't keep still."

I didn't get this idea of lying still and the declaration that I would be terribly sick if I didn't. I had heard a lot of talk about smoking the pipe and I was always of the opinion that it made one feel like a millionaire and that one had the most wonderful dreams.

"I never heard of anybody being sick after hitting the pipe," I exclaimed.

"You won't git sick," Johnny assured me, "if you keep still."

Benny gave me the first pill that he cooked.

"Inhale it," he said. "Draw it away into yer lungs and then blow it out just like y' do a cigarette."

I proceeded to follow his advice and right away I began to choke. The Chinks and the rest of the hop fiends laughed at me.

"Tastes like hell," I grunted as I passed the pipe over to Benny. "I don't see any kick in this racket."

"Wait until y' git a few pills, Jackie," Benny replied, "wait

until y' git the effect of a few pills and I'll bet me hat that y' change yer mind."

The second pill tasted a little better and I didn't gag and choke. I inhaled it into my lungs slowy and blew it out again as Benny had instructed me to do. The third one was better than the second one and then I began to feel light and cheery. After I had consumed the fourth pill it seemed to me that I had drifted into another world. I didn't do any dreaming and I didn't think I was a millionaire or a god or a poet, but I did feel pleasant and cheerful and talkative. And I, for the first time in my life, began to think of girls. Simultaneously I lifted my heavy eyelids and observed a swell-looking chicken over in one of the bunks. I could just see the outline of her face and when she got in a certain position I could distinguish her eyes and teeth. Our eyes met. I smiled at her. She returned the smile. Johnny saw me smile:

"Making a broad?" he asked.

"Listen, Jackie," Benny whispered, "don't go trying to make no broads in this joint, because all the dames that y' see in here are either grifters, hustlers or the girls of grifters; cut it out or yer liable to git yerself into a jam."

I paid absolutely no attention to Benny's comments and went on flirting with the girl in the bunk. The fellow with whom she was smoking had his back to me, so that he couldn't see whom she was flirting with. Once again Benny cautioned me. Finally he called one of the Chinks over to where we were lying and asked him who the people were that were occupying the bunk.

"Listen, Jackie," Benny leaned over the lamp and murmured, "that's Scar Face Jimmy Kelly and his broad in that bunk. Don't try to make his broad or he's liable to croak y'."

Then he gave me Kelly's reputation. He was a gang leader, a pimp, an ex-pug and an all round bad man.

"He's got a couple of notches on his gat," Johnny cut in; "he's a bad hombre, Jackie, so lay off his broad."

When I smoked my fifth pill of hop, Jimmy Kelly didn't mean any more to me than any other human being on earth. I had never felt so courageous. I liked his girl. I wanted her and the fact that she had returned my smiles indicated to me that she wanted me.

"Ah," I snarled, "to hell with Scar Face Jimmy Kelly. Who's afraid of 'im!"

Benny and Johnny pleaded with me to cut out the flirting. I laughed at them. Finally Kelly caught the girl smiling. He turned around and looked over where we were lying. I shifted my eyes in another direction.

"Dere's going to be an awful battle here, if y' don't cut out that stuff," Benny said.

The girl smiled at me again. I smiled at her. Suddenly Kelly turned and caught me smiling. He got out of the bunk and came over to me and kicked me in the shins.

"Dat's my goil," he snapped. "I've put the works on more than one mug fer trying to make her, kid; so if yer a wise brat lay off or I'm liable to put the works on you."

Scar Face was a big fellow and he was a rough-looking individual. He stood around six feet and weighed about a hundred and ninety, while I was in the neighborhood of five feet nine and weighed about a hundred and twenty-five. He had it all over me in height and weight, and this, in addition to the things that Benny had said about him, sort of got my goat, so that when he kicked me in the shins I made no effort to come back at him.

Then it suddenly dawned upon me that I had acted yellow. I was sorry that I hadn't given him a battle.

"He couldn't have done any more than beat me," I thought; "why in the hell did I let him get away with that grand stand play?"

Now I was fighting mad. It was the first time in my life that I had ever refused to fight. While these thoughts were flying through my mind Kelly started to argue with his girl. Then I began to think that the girl wouldn't have any use for me now that I had acted the coward.

"If I catch y' smiling at dat punk over dere again," Kelly was talking, "I'll bust y' one in the mug."

I looked over toward the girl and smiled. She grinned from ear to ear.

"You lousy bastard," he shouted at her, "I'll put the works on y' right now." He leaned over and hit her. She screamed. I jumped up and met him just as he was getting out of the bunk to give me the works.

We dove into a clinch and began to rough it all over the joint. The hop fiends were shouting as Kelly and I fell and stumbled over the "layouts" (the lamps, pipes, cards of hop and yen hawks). The girl, Rose Monaco, stood off to the side, cursing and swearing at Scar Face and taunting him for beating up a kid. Now and then she would shout words of encouragement at me:

"Give the big stiff hell, kid! Bang him, bang him, bite him, kick him, kid, kick 'im."

I fought for all I was worth. I wanted to lick Scar Face, though the physical odds were against me. He was much stronger than I. He gave me a terrific beating about the body when he got me into a clinch, but when I stood off and fought him at long range I cut him to pieces with left hand jabs and I was about to put him out when he suddenly whipped a "billy" out of his pocket and banged me over the head, splitting my skull wide open.

When I regained consciousness some six or eight hours later I was on a cot in Bellevue Hospital. The doctors thought that concussion of the brain would probably ensue, but I pulled out of that, escaped it by a hair. The boys came to see me in the hospital. All the hop heads from Tom Quong's visited me. They all voted me "a game kid" and predicted great things for me. Benny and Johnny marveled at my nerve in daring to fight the notorious "Scar Face Jimmy" Kelly, gangster, dope fiend, white slaver and killer.

"I'm not done with that guy," I told them; "wait until I get out of here and I'll run him into the Hudson river."

"But Rose, his girl, is dead stuck on y', Jackie," Benny informed me. "I met her last night in Mooney's place and she was asking me all about y' and she said that she would come up to see y' if she thought y' would like to see her."

"She did, eh?" I was tickled to death, because I thought I had an awful crush on Rose.

"She's nuts about y' Jackie," Benny went on; "all she did was to rave about y' all the time that I was chewing the rag wid her."

"She's a swell-looking girl," I replied; "tell her to come see me, Benny."

"I'd lay off dat broad if I was you, Jackie," Johnny cut in.

"She's got y' in enough trouble already and that mug Kelly is liable to croak y' if he finds out that she's stuck on y'."

"I'm not afraid of Kelly," I declared. "If she wants to come see me, tell her to come."

The next day Rose came to see me with Benny and Johnny. It was the first time that I had got a good look at her. She was pretty. She had nice teeth, a lot of golden blonde hair, dark blue eyes and the pale skin of the opium smoker, which seemed to enhance her beauty. And there was something sweet about her, despite the fact that she was mixed up with one of the worst rats that ever rambled over the underworld trails. This time she didn't act or talk like an underworld woman. She wasn't profane or vulgar. I was an ignorant, unknowing, harum-scarum eighteen-year-old brat; nevertheless, I began to moralize with her.

"What's a nice girl like you, Rose, doing with a tramp like that mug, Kelly?"

"He used to be good to me when I first went with him," she said; "but lately he's been treating me like a dog."

"He taught you how to hit the stem?"

"I never knew anything about drugs until I met him," she went on. "He broke me in, taught me how to smoke, how to boost [steal], and if I had never met him the chances are that I never would have been in this racket."

She said that she first met Scar Face in her home town, Albany, and that he had represented himself as a theatrical agent.

"He told me that he would put me on the stage if I went to New York with him, but after we got here he didn't live up to his promise. He kept stalling and stalling me until the first thing I knew was that he had me up against the pipe. Then he took me out along Fifth Avenue and showed me how to boost [shoplift]. I used to like him, but I'm disgusted with him now and I've made up my mind to quit him."

She said that she had been wanting to quit him for a year or more, but that she was afraid to leave him. He had threatened to kill her if she ever left him. He had her "buffaloed." She thought he was a man-eater until she saw me putting the works on him that night in Tom Quong's hop joint.

"You would have beat him, Jackie," she said, "if he hadn't pulled that blackjack on you and split your head open."

"When I get out of here," I told her, "I'm going to take him like Grant took Richmond; I can lick that mug and I mean to do it just as soon as I am better."

I really intended to kill Kelly when I got out of the hospital. It seemed to me that that was the one way of convincing Rose that I was no ordinary underworld kid, but a rough and tough, knock-'em-down-and-drag-'em-out bad young man. I had an idea that she would like me much better and that all the underworld dames would like me much better if I could build up a reputation as a dare-devil.

"Kelly's a raw-jawed dangler," I thought. "Most of the crooks are afraid of him and if I can knock him off, I'll have all the rest of them eating out of my hand and then all the dames will be nuts about little Boston Jackie."

Before I was released from the hospital Rose and I had confessed our love for each other. She told me that she "had a yen" for me the first time she saw me in the hop joint.

"Yen?" I said. "What's that?"

"You don't know what yen means, Jackie?" she laughed.

"We talk different in Boston." I tried to make it appear that I wasn't so dumb.

"Yen," she continued, "means that I like you. It also means appetite."

She left Scar Face the day before the hospital authorities turned me out. She had rented a furnished apartment over on West Forty-Sixth Street and she took me over there to live with her. It was while I was there that I woke up to the fact that she was educated and that she possessed a certain amount of refinement.

"I ain't going to let you support me like you did Scar Face. I——"

"Don't say 'ain't,' Jackie, that's wrong," she interrupted me, "and for God's sake take that spoon out of your cup. You should never drink with the spoon in your cup."

"Why not?" I was puzzled.

"It isn't proper," she was smiling at me; "it isn't considered good form to drink with the spoon in the cup, and 'ain't' is

ungrammatical. Instead of saying 'ain't' you must say 'I will not' or 'I am not.' "

Every time we sat down to eat she had some criticism to offer.

"Don't eat with your knife, Jackie, use your fork."

"What the hell's the matter with the knife?" I would ask her.

Then she would give me a lecture on how to use the table tools. These things were new to me. I had never heard about them at home or in the reform school.

But one morning while we were having breakfast Rose made me hostile. She leaned back in her chair and started to roar with laughter. I hadn't said anything to make her laugh and so I remarked:

"What's up? What are you screaming about?"

"Jackie," she replied, "you're a riot; for God's sake stop drinking out of that saucer. Use your cup. Saucers weren't made to drink out of, dear."

"Say," I roared at her, "what the hell are you trying to do, make a dude out of me?"

"No," she replied, "I'm not trying to make a dude out of you. I'm simply trying to make a gentleman out of you so that we can go and play the swell hotels and make some big dough."

"Blackmailing?"

"The easiest graft in the world," she told me.

"What about the hotel dicks?"

"There never was a copper that couldn't be bought," she said. "The first thing we've got to do is square the hotel dicks; after that it's just like finding it."

So Rose was teaching me how to talk and act like a gentleman for the purpose of making a blackmailer out of me. In the meantime I was working the subways with Johnny and Benny. We went out every afternoon about four o'clock and worked until six in the evening. We averaged about a hundred dollars a day and when I had saved around five hundred bucks Rose insisted that we get a couple of swell outfits, move to a more pretentious apartment and then go to blackmailing. The blackmailing racket didn't appeal to me. I would much rather pick pockets. I didn't want Rose to take any chances.

"I can cop enough dough to keep the both of us," I protested; "all you've got to do is keep house and cook and be on the level with me. I'm a money getter, baby."

She insisted that she didn't want to be a wallflower. She was determined to "grift" with me. She thought picking pockets was "the racket of a cripple."

"There's nothing classy about picking pockets," she argued, "no big money in it. We can get real money in the blackmailing racket and then we can buy our own home and have a swell hop layout and keep away from all those Chink joints."

She finally persuaded me to cut the dipping gag (quit picking pockets). Thereupon we got the apartment, the swell togs and began to work around the hoity-toity hotels.

The Waldorf was the first one we selected. There was a "dick" there in those days who'd stand for anything so long as he got his bit of whatever came off. Rose and I had an agreement with him. He would allow us to operate in the hotel for twenty-five per cent of what we copped. But he wouldn't stand for us trimming any suckers in the house. We had to do the trimming on the outside.

"No grifting in this house," he solemnly declared. "The house must be kept clean. I won't stand for anything here. I don't give a damn what happens to the guest on the outside, but on the inside—that's different."

Rose was the brains of the family. She organized the system that we were to follow.

"We saunter into the dining room for lunch," she explained; "we act very upstageish, Jackie, when we enter the dining room, and I hope to God that you won't forget yourself and drink out of the saucer, or use your knife when you should use the fork or drink with the spoon in the cup. You've got to be very careful, dear, because everybody that goes to the Waldorf is very fussy."

"I'll be careful," I promised her.

"After we've been seated," she went on, "I'll pick out some nice-looking old man that looks like a live sap. You, of course, are not supposed to know that I'm flirting and I will flirt in such a fashion that he, the sap, will think that he's putting it over on you, stealing your baby. When I think I've got him on the hip, I'll give you the tip and you can let on that you're

going out to the men's room or some other part of the hotel. Then when you get out he will probably come over to my table, and then I'll slip him my 'phone number. You come strolling back into the dining room as though you didn't know a thing about what happened. Get me?"

She drilled me in the apartment for three days before she would take me to the Waldorf. She was still afraid that I didn't know how to handle the knife and fork, that I wouldn't know how to perform when I got into a joint like the Waldorf. When she was satisfied that I wouldn't pull any "bulls," we went to lunch one day at the famous hotel. I will admit that I felt like a duck out of water, but I managed to act the part all right, though I would much rather have been in the Baltimore Dairy Lunch or some other "ham-and" joint.

The menu staggered me. I didn't get those fancy names, didn't know what the dishes were. I couldn't read the dope sheet at all. Rose saw that I was stuck.

"Can't you order, dear?" she smiled at me.

"No," I replied, "I'll take some ham and eggs and a cup of Java."

"Good God," she gasped, "ham and eggs for lunch in the Waldorf? Jackie, dear, don't be silly!"

"Well, what will I eat? I can't get that lingo on the bill of fare."

"Don't say bill of fare," she protested, "you're not in Beefsteak John's. Say menu."

Rose had to order the lunch, a filet mignon montebello, French fried potatoes, stewed tomatoes, corn, olives and celery. Here is where I pulled the second bad play. I proceeded to dump the tomatoes, the corn and olives on my plate. I had never eaten olives before, had never heard of them or even seen one, and so far as I knew they might have been vegetables.

"Heavens alive," Rose murmured, "you'll disgrace me. Don't dump those olives and the rest of those vegetables on your plate!"

I stopped the dumping process. I put an olive in my mouth and cracked down on it with my ivories. An ache shot through my jaws.

"Good Lord," Rose snapped, "what are you trying to do, eat the stone and all? Don't you know that olives have stones in

them just like peaches and prunes. Pick it up in your hand for God's sake and eat it like you would a peach."

After these Third Avenue capers I got away to a good start. I watched myself, or possibly I should say that I watched Rose. I did what she did. I handled myself without falling in the dishes and she was pleased. Presently she whispered:

"I've got an old John nibbling over here on my right."

Before the dessert came she told me to breeze out in the lobby for five minutes.

"Stall away for five minutes until I make him," she said.

I followed instructions and when I returned to the table she told me that the "old John" had "taken the tumble."

"He was over here," she said, "and I slipped him a ducat [card] with the 'phone number on it; he's going to call me up at the apartment to-night."

The "old John" was a merchant from Kansas City and apparently a man of wealth. At six that evening he 'phoned the apartment. Rose began to peddle the salve to him. She invited him to the apartment. The date was set for eight o'clock. It was arranged that I should burst into the apartment soon after his arrival and play the part of the outraged husband, accuse him of trying to make my wife and then demand five gran (five thousand dollars) hush money. He arrived promptly at eight. I was planted across the street. About twenty-five minutes later I sauntered into the apartment. He was sitting on the couch with Rose. She pretended to be greatly excited. She jumped up from the couch. The "old John" was trembling from head to foot.

"Well, for Christ's sake," I grunted, as I threw my hat on the table and pulled off my coat and glared at the old fellow, "who in the hell are you and what are you doing here wid my wife. Who's this mug?" I spoke to her. "What's the idea of having a man in my apartment?" I made a pass at her. The old fellow grabbed his hat and started for the door. I jumped in front of him. Rose began to cry. "Just a minute, just a minute, friend," I spoke to him, "yer not going to git out of this so easy. Yer going to hand me a nice piece of change or I'm going to beat you up and then I'm going to put yer name in every newspaper in New York City."

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "I didn't know this young lady was your wife. I'm sorry," he was still trembling, "and I guess we can fix it up all right, can't we?"

"You're damn right that we'll fix it up," I shouted. "I know you, know all about you. I saw you talking to my wife in the dining room of the Waldorf to-day at lunch when I stepped out to the lobby."

I gave him a rough and tough line for about ten minutes, after which he pulled out his purse and handed me three one hundred dollar bills.

Then Rose began to act.

"Don't give him any money, Mr. Carlton," she snapped. "Get out of my apartment, you dirty parasite!" She shook her fist in my face. "I'm tired of you, you're no good, you've never been any good. I——"

I grabbed her by the throat and threw her on the floor.

"I'll make this old granddaddy of yours pay me five thousand dollars or I'll advertise him all over the world and I'll knock your block off, if you don't keep your trap shut."

"Now, my dear fellow," the old boy addressed me, "I don't want to have any trouble with you. I'll pay you what you ask, but I haven't got that much money on my person and neither have I a check book with me. To-morrow I will give you the balance. I will come here to your apartment with the rest of the amount that you demand."

"You pack your bag and get out of here," I snarled at Rose, "get out quick."

This last play was for the purpose of convincing the old boy that the affair was absolutely on the level. What a boob I was! Rose packed a few things and went out of the apartment crying. The John followed her.

"I'll be looking for you, Mister, with the rest of that money in the morning, and if yer not here by noon I'm coming to the hotel after you." I slammed the door.

Rose returned five minutes later.

"Dear," she kissed me, "you played your part splendidly. I didn't think you could do so well and he ate it up hook, line and sinker."

"He was scared to death. I thought he was going to do a Brodie," I laughed.

"Now the first thing we've got to do," Rose said, "is to get in touch with the dick at the Waldorf and give him his bit out of the three hundred and tell him that there's forty-seven hundred more coming in the morning. We've got to stand in with him if we're going to work his hotel any more."

We 'phoned Jimmy, the crooked hotel dick, and made an appointment to meet him when he quit work that night. We gave him seventy-five dollars out of the three hundred and told him about the forty-seven hundred that the sucker was to deliver to me in the morning.

"Soft pickings," he grinned when I handed him the coin, "but I don't see how y' git away wid it; yer both so young looking. How old are y', anyway?"

"I'm twenty-three," Rose spoke up, "and Jackie's nineteen."

"Y' ought to be a couple of world-beaters when y' grow up." Jimmy the Dick roared with laughter.

"We'll manage to make both ends meet," Rose replied.

"Yer both smokers, ain't y'? Y' hit the pipe, don't y'?" Jimmy asked.

"Yes," I stuck out my chest as though I considered hitting the pipe a great thing, "we kick the gong around now and then; come up and see us and we'll cook y' a few pills, Jimmy."

"No," Jimmy replied, "I never smoke nothing but honest long cut; that gives me all the kicks that I need in my bizness. If y'll take a tip from me," Jimmy laid his hands on our shoulders, "y'll cut out the dope gag. Cut it out; it ain't never done nobody no good. The old Broadway trail is lined with men and women that the dope has made tramps out of. It gits all of 'em and it'll git you kids; so cut it out."

Jimmy's advice, in our opinion, wasn't worth a nickel. When we got back to the apartment that night we "kicked the gong around" for an hour or more, smoked until we were all lit up like a Christmas tree. We talked about what we were going to do with the forty-seven hundred dollars. We raved and planned to beat the band.

"We'll take a trip to Paris, Jackie," Rose suggested. "What-aya say, dear?"

I was so loaded with hop that I would have consented to do anything.

"Paris suits me, baby," I told her; "we'll go to Paris."

"We'll get a lot of suckers in Paris, Jackie."

So before we smoked the last pill we had agreed to go to Paris with the proceeds of our first blackmailing stunt.

Mr. Carlton came to the apartment the following morning with the forty-seven hundred bucks. The sight of all that money gave me an awful thrill.

"Here you are," he handed me the wad of greenbacks, "but I warn you that if you try to get any more money from me I will go to the police. I will not be bled for any more." He turned abruptly and left the room. I felt like screaming with joy. Suddenly there came a knock on the door.

"It's the maid, I guess," Rose declared; "let her in, dear."

I opened the door.

In stepped Jimmy, the dick from the Waldorf, with Mr. Carlton and two other men.

"Git yer togs on." One of the two other men flashed his badge. "We're from detective headquarters. And give me that bundle of dough." He pulled the forty-seven hundred in greenbacks out of my hand. "Some blackmailers," he laughed. "The both of y' ought to be in the kindergarten. This is the rawest and the most amateurish stick-up that I've ever bumped into during the twenty-odd years that I've been on the trail of grifters."

Jimmy the Dick had double-crossed us! He was playing both ends against the middle. He was an honest detective. And he was clever, while Rose and I were a couple of donkey pikers.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST SAFE-BLOWING

THE Central Office dicks talked Rose and me into pleading guilty to the blackmailing charge. I knew very little about the methods of the police in those days and it was the only time in my underworld career that they succeeded in bulling me into pleading guilty. From that time on I would never say "guilty" regardless of what they had on me. Only once more was I deluded into actually pleading guilty, to my sorrow. I always stood trial and took my chances with a jury, which invariably found me guilty. Now and then they found me guilty of crimes that I hadn't committed.

The Judge sentenced Rose and me to serve two years in State's Prison. She went to the women's prison at Auburn. I went to Sing Sing.

Sing Sing was a tough joint in those days, one of the five worst stirs in the United States. The other four were the Eastern Penitentiary in Philadelphia, Moyamensing Prison in Philadelphia, Joliet, Illinois and San Quentin, California. The Sing Sing of to-day is an entirely different place. They make good men out of bad ones there now. Joliet has changed considerably, and so has the Eastern Pennsylvania prison, but Moyamensing is still the king pin, hell hole of America. In Moyamensing they still work on the old theory that you must "break 'em and then you can make 'em eat out of the hand."

The old gang of Sing Sing keepers were a hard-boiled combination, but they weren't any more hard-boiled than I was. Of course, no crook with an ounce of common sense ever tries to run a prison. I was short on common sense; so I started in to convince the keepers that I was the toughest young man that they had ever seen. The keepers immediately proceeded to convince me that I was all wrong, that I only thought I was tough and that they specialized in making lambs out of lions.

"We'll treat y' right," they told me, "if y' go along and do yer work and keep yer mouth shut. But if y' don't do as we say, why, we'll just have to keep on sapping y' until we either kill y' or cure y'. Take yer choice, kid, we got lots of leather here fer yer hide."

I was possessed with the ambition to be known as the toughest guy in the prison. I wouldn't work. I wouldn't obey the rules. I set out to be a rebel with a big streak of hell, who feared neither God nor man. The keepers razzle-dazzled me for breakfast, dinner and supper and the more they razzle-dazzled me the more unregenerate I became. They marveled at my staying qualities. No convict had ever stood the gaff as I had stood it. They couldn't break me. The convicts voted me a game kid. I thrilled to their admiration. I would rather have had their good will, would rather have had them pat me on the back and tell me how game I was, than to have shaken hands with the President of the United States. In my opinion there wasn't anybody in the world like the underworld men. They were the salt of the earth, the last word in manliness, the only people for whom I had any love or cared to live with.

My conduct in Sing Sing attracted the attention of an old safe cracker called "Rochester Red." One day after I had come out of the dungeon Red began to talk with me. I had heard the boys refer to him as "a peter man," as one of the best that ever handled a drill. I felt like an important person when Red spoke to me.

"I want to give you a piece of advice, kid," he said. "Cut out that rough stuff before these screws kill you. Don't be a damn fool, Jackie. Nobody with any sense fights prison keepers. Keep your mouth shut. Do what they tell you to do. If you want to be tough, wait until you get outside. I know what I'm talking about."

"Ah, to hell with 'em," I said.

"Now listen, kid," Red continued. "I've seen a lot of wild fellows try to do what you're doing and I never saw one of them get away with it. Take the advice of an old timer and be the lamb whenever you land in a stir; you'll live longer. No grifter is ever tough in a prison."

Red made me think. I looked around the prison and began

to make observations. He was right. All the grifters, all the confidence men, safe crackers, bank burglars, forgers, bank sneaks and prowlers were good prisoners. The keepers never had any trouble with the professional crooks. They did their work, obeyed the rules and went their way day in and day out like a regiment of wooden soldiers.

"What's it going to get you," Red went on, "to be a tough guy in prison? Don't be a yap, Jackie, don't be a yap. Cut the rough stuff before they take you out in a box."

The old burglar woke me up. He made me see the error of my ways and yet I didn't want to follow his advice because I had a hunch that the screws would think they had broken me if I cut out the rough stuff. I told him how I felt.

"Well," he grinned, "what the hell difference does it make to you what they think? If you don't care whether you live or die, why go on act the yap; but if you want to live to go out of this joint, you better start in doing what they tell you."

I changed my viewpoint. The ambition to be known as the toughest mug in the big prison died a natural death. I went to work. I obeyed the rules. Consequently I was out of the dungeon for the rest of my term and had plenty of chances to chat with "Rochester Red" and the rest of the underworld men, who thrilled me with stories of their escapades. I listened to the "con" men tell how they skinned this sucker and that one. I listened to the bank sneak thief relate how he worked the banks. I got a line on all the various fancy thinkers, and after I had listened to all of them it seemed to me that the life of the cracksman was far and away the most romantic and the most spectacular of all. I was dominated by an all-consuming passion to become a safe cracker. I thought about it night and day. "Rochester Red" was my god. I would lay awake in my cell at night painting mental pictures of safe robberies, dreaming of explosions. I saw myself with a kit of tools, a big gun strapped to my hip, fuses and explosives in a hand bag, on my way up the main street of some town to pull off a robbery. I was in prison, but I lived in a fever-dream, making my plans.

I finally persuaded Red to let me cell with him. I wanted to be near him night and day to listen to him talk. I wanted

to learn how a safe was blown open. I wanted to know where the burglar drilled the hole, how much powder he put in the safe, what the explosion sounded like, where he got the drills and the explosive and every other detail of the trade.

And strange as it may seem Red tried to discourage me, tried to put a damper on my ambition to become a safe cracker. I didn't get him at that time, but I do now. Old Red had been a cracksman for twenty years. He had played a losing game. He had suffered a lot and I presume that, when I pleaded with him to wise me up to the secrets of the profession, he was thinking of how much better off he would have been if he had got in some other sort of career. The underworld had never given him anything but defeats and disappointments. He didn't want to see anybody else buck a game that couldn't be beaten.

"Listen, kid," he said to me, "get that underworld bug out of your noodle. There's nothing to the crooked game. When you get out of here go home, get a job and go to work. I've been in the racket for twenty-one years and what have I got? Nothing. I've served nine of the twenty-one years in stirs all over the world. You can't beat this racket. It's no good and if I was your age nobody could talk me into grifting."

I ridiculed this advice. He could talk me into being a good prisoner, but he couldn't talk me into going to work.

"I'm going to be a peter man when I get out of here," I told him.

"You're nuts," he said, "and the day is coming when you'll wish that you had taken my advice, Jackie."

I laughed at him then, but I have wished a hundred times since that I had taken "Rochester Red's" advice. A hundred times or more in my underworld career I have thought of "Rochester Red" and how he pleaded with me in Sing Sing to go straight. More than once I have sat on the edge of a cot in a cell and thought it over, comparing what I was with what I might have been if I had followed the old cracksman's advice.

But I was young, headstrong, and possessed with an obstinate determination to dangle over the crime trail. The cracksman's life lured me on. No other life would do. Me for the underworld, safes, banks, explosives, drills.

"To hell with the straight life," I told Red. "I'm going to be a grifter."

I talked him into taking me with him. I was released from Sing Sing about a month before him. I met him when he came out. He took me along. I was never so happy. On my way at last to master the art of the safe cracker!

In those days powder was the conventional underworld explosive. The first thing we had to get was powder. Red bought it. It could be bought without arousing suspicion. He told the storekeepers that he wanted it to make shells, that he was going on a hunting trip. The drills, of course, were just as easily bought. The other tools were stolen, as you will presently see.

The first town we looked over was Cape Charles, Virginia. Red and I did the scouting. Here is where I learned my first lesson. We entered the post office. The safe stood in a room in the rear of the office. He bought a book of postage stamps, but all the while I observed that he had his eyes on the safe. When we got outside he spoke.

"That's a good mark," he said.

"Mark?" I didn't get him.

"A mark," he explained, "means a safe that can be knocked off pretty easy. It's a good mark because it's a good location."

He told me that location had a lot to do with the success or failure of a robbery.

"There's nobody sleeping over that obey [post office]," he went on, "and nobody living on either side of it; therefore, it's a fine mark."

Then he told me what kind of a safe it was and how he knew that it was that kind of a safe.

"That's a front-lock pete," he explained, "and I know that it's a front-lock pete because the handle is not near the combination. When the handle and the combination are close together it's a back-lock pete."

He explained the difference between a back-lock pete and a front-lock pete. He said a "front-locker" locked behind the first sheeting in the door, while a "back-locker" locked behind the last sheeting in the door.

"The most important part of the job is the frame up," he

went on. "Always look your mark over carefully before you go up against it. Look for wires, the make of the safe and——"

"Wires?" I interrupted him. "What kind of wires?"

"Burglar alarms," he said.

I asked him how he could tell a burglar alarm from a telephone wire or an electric light wire.

"Easy," he replied. "A telephone wire will run out onto a line with other wires. An electric light wire will do the same thing, but it's all different with a burglar-alarm wire. In all these small towns the yaps have their burglar alarms connected up with their homes. In big cities, of course, it's different. They connect up with the offices of the burglar alarm people. Whenever you see a wire running from a store to the home of the storekeeper, it's a million to one that it's a burglar alarm wire."

I listened to him attentively. I was interested. He explained everything so thoroughly. Red was a great man for details. But he wasn't through.

"Knocking off a pete and getting the dough," he was saying, "is easy. That's the easiest part of the racket. The hardest part of the racket is the get-away. Not one in a thousand crooks get caught doing the job. The pinch comes after the blow off. The get-away is *the most important* part of the racket. Never pull off anything until you have framed up your get-away. And after you get into a joint, never start to work on the safe until you have decided how you're going to get out if anybody should come in on you. Always have a front and a rear exit."

He decided that we would make our get-away across Chesapeake Bay to Norfolk.

"On the passenger boat?" I asked him.

"Hell, no," he grunted, "on a freight barge. We'll plant down in the hold of the barge where the crew won't be able to see us. No passenger boats for us, Jackie."

He said there was one other matter to be looked into before we could blow the post office safe.

"We've got to tab the 'night hack' [watchman]," he said, "get a line on his movements."

So we tabbed him one night, followed him all over the town. He went by the post office twice, at midnight and one-

thirty, after which he went home and stayed there until about five o'clock.

"This is a real eighteen-carat pipe," Red said; "it'll be a walk-away."

The following night was to be the big night for me. I looked forward to it with mingled delight and apprehension. I wasn't exactly terrified at the thought of my first safe-cracking expedition, but I was a little bit shaky. I was constantly trying to figure out what it was going to be like, what sort of noise the explosion would make, what sort of flash it would create, what effect it would have on the safe. I had visions of the building coming down when the explosion occurred. I threw question after question at Red concerning the thoughts that were flitting through my brain, to all of which he simply answered:

"Wait, wait."

I had a hunch that I was in for an interesting night. I think I felt pretty much like the soldier going into his first battle. I was all "nerves" and though it was a comparatively warm night, in the latter part of September, little beads of perspiration were trickling down my face and my back. About one in the morning we started for the town. We had spent the day under cover in the woods about two miles out of Cape Charles. On the way down the railroad track, Red proceeded to outline my duties.

"Don't get excited," he said; "keep cool. Don't walk around. Stand in one place."

He stopped at a box car, got down on his knees and then pulled a long piece of iron out of a brake-shoe.

"This brake-shoe pin," he explained, "will do for a jimmy to get into the smithy where we'll get what tools we'll need."

The blacksmith shop was on the edge of the town. Red pulled the staple out of the door with the brake-shoe pin and entered the shop. He came out with sledge hammer, a drill brace, two chisels and a crowbar.

He said the chisels would be used to kick in the "obey" and that the brace would be used to drill the safe.

"A crowbar comes in handy," he said, "and so does a sledge hammer. Sometimes the door doesn't come off when the explosion occurs and then we've got to pry it off."

I carried some of the tools to the post office, the sledge hammer and the crowbar. Red put the "glim" (flash light) up against the keyhole and peered into it.

"Never enter a joint," he said, "until you've taken a slant at the keyhole."

"Why?" I didn't get him.

"Why?" he grunted. "Because if there's a key on the inside of the door it means that there's somebody in the joint."

"Lot of little things to this business," I remarked.

"Put them tools down and come here." He crouched in front of the door and got ready to throw it in.

He began at the bottom of the door at the jam. He stuck a chisel in between the door and the sill and sprung the door out.

"Put your chisel in," he commanded.

I stuck the chisel below his.

"No, no," he grunted, "put it above my chisel."

He sprung the door a little more. Then he took out his and put it above mine. We kept changing until presently the door broke loose from the lock and swung open. Now I was all nerves. I was trembling from head to feet.

"Here,"—he handed me his six-inch forty-four,—"take this gat."

I reached for the gat.

"If you see anybody coming down the street," he went on, "and they don't see you, call me out."

"If they do see me what'll I do?"

"What'll you do," he snarled, "what the hell do you think you ought to do, go up and shake hands with them? If they see you go up and stick your cannon under their mug and make 'em toss their mitts in the air."

He left me and entered the "obey." I felt my stomach trembling. I was lonely and scared. My mouth was dry and my knees were knocking. I looked on through the window. Red was down on his knees in front of the safe, drilling like mad. He had the flash light on a chair right in front of the "pete." I gazed at him, spellbound with wonder and admiration, and for a moment I forgot all about my nervousness. I was thinking what a great fellow he was and I was thinking

of what a great fellow I would be when I got to the stage of the game where I could knock off a pete.

Suddenly the sound of voices jarred me out of my reverie. I turned from the window and listened. I dashed into the post office and told Red that somebody was coming down the street and when we got out on the sidewalk we heard a banjo playing. Then the people began to sing.

"Boogies [niggers]," Red exclaimed.

Nearer and nearer they came. When they got within a hundred yards or so of the "obey" Red pulled me inside and shut the door.

"Keep still now," he said, "until they pass."

But they didn't pass. They stopped right in front of the "obey." There were four of them. They had a bottle of whisky. They "flopped" on the steps. A string of oaths slipped through Red's lips. One coon passed the bottle. They sat there for twenty minutes, after which they began to talk and then they got into an argument over which songs they should sing. One "boogie" wanted to sing "Dat man am buring way down yonder in the land of cotton." Another preferred "Listen till ah tell y' what the dummy done," while a third wanted "When y' hear dem roosters crowing it's a sign of rain." Eventually they compromised on the last-named song.

All the while Red was swearing like a trooper. Finally he said:

"To hell with those boogies, I'm going to knock off the pete."

He tiptoed over to the "pete." The coons hadn't started in on the song yet. Red began to pour the powder into the hole in the front of the safe door, after which he inserted the fuse. I was scared to death. I had visions of being blown to pieces. Red struck a match and then the coons started in on, "When you hear dem roosters crowing it's a sign of rain."

Red lighted the end of the fuse. Immediately it began to spit little bright red balls of flame. Red stood close by. The "boogies" were singing "to beat the band" and the banjo was clicking merrily. My eyes were riveted on the fuse. The little bright red balls of flame continued to flare up and then

die. The fuse was getting smaller by the second, getting nearer and nearer the hole where the powder was confined. Then it disappeared. I knew the explosion would occur any second now. I crouched down and placed my hands over my ears. I was terrified, but I couldn't take my eyes off the "pete." Suddenly there was a blinding red-white flash followed by a deafening roar. The safe door was torn off the hinges and went flying across the room into the letter-box section. The glass tumbled out of the windows. A water bucket crashed to the ground, tables and chairs danced around the room and in the midst of the turmoil the "boogies" screamed, dropped the banjo and tore down the street like a gang of maniacs.

Red hurriedly rifled the "pete," and within two or three minutes after the explosion we were on our way down to the N.Y.,P.&N.R.R. docks to board the freights barge for the ride across the Chesapeake Bay to Norfolk. The job netted $750 in cash and $1000 in postage stamps.

We planted down in the hold of the big barge. Before we left the dock a storm came up and by the time that we got out in the middle of the bay it had developed into a hurricane. The old barge rocked and rolled. The thunder roared. The lightning snapped and flashed. Waves washed deck and streamed into the hold, drenching Red and me to the skin. I was more scared now than I had been in the "obey," and when I heard a terrific noise and Red said that the box cars were being washed overboard by the raging seas, I thought the end was near. I began to say the Lord's Prayer, the first time that I had prayed in four or five years. The more I prayed the harder the storm raged and then I just made up my mind to die if I had to die. I couldn't get any consolation out of the prayers.

That was the worst night that I ever lived through and I certainly heaved a sigh of relief when the barge pulled into the docks at Norfolk the next afternoon some eight or ten hours late.

We ragged up (bought new clothes) in Norfolk and several days later we went to New York to dicker the stickers (stamps). This fellow in New York, a former safe cracker, "Alton Sammy," paid us eighty cents on the dollar for the

stickers, giving us eight hundred dollars for the thousand dollars' worth.

Incidentally, the U. S. Post Office Department knew that "Alton Sammy" bought stamps from post office burglars. They had known it for many years, but, much to the discredit of the Government sleuths, they could never get the goods on him. He bought hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of stamps from safe crackers and then he retired to enter business. To-day he's a well-known politician in New York City. He gives crooks a wide berth, doesn't associate with them and won't even speak to them. Very recently he gave out an interview to a New York newspaper man in which he advocated the death penalty as the only method by which society would be able to put an end to the activities of the daylight hold-up man. Whenever I hear that old song, "Goodness me, how things have changed since mother was a girl" I think of "Alton Sammy"!

I had an amusing experience in New York City after Red and I had dickered the stickers to "Alton Sammy." Red was a great fellow for putting on the dog. He loved the good things of life, all the luxuries and comforts. He once told me that he was only able to live through the various prison terms by reminiscing, by living over again the moments of luxury and ease that had been his whenever he had made a big touch. His hobby was expensive hotels. The more expensive they were the better he liked them. He wanted to be exclusive and he liked to talk about the wonderful hotels that he had tossed his frame in. He insisted that we put up at the Waldorf and that we have a suite of rooms, parlor, bedroom and bath. I consented, but I felt like a duck out of water. He registered as father and son, A. K. Ward and J. T. Ward of Boston, Mass.

I now had more money than ever before. I felt like a big man. I roamed the hotel corridors with my hands in my pockets and my hat on the back of my head, and my hair, incidentally, parted in the middle and heavily oiled, plastered down on my forehead like that of a modern cake-eater.

CHAPTER V

PRISON IN TENNESSEE

AFTER a few weeks of easy life, Red and I moved down to Baltimore. He said he wanted to get me out of New York before some "wise broad" kidnapped me or sold me a few shares in the Brooklyn Bridge.

I had my second peter blowing experience in Baltimore. I was not quite so nervous on the second job and after I had seen the third one blown, I was as cool as a cucumber. I loved the racket. I got a great kick out of prowling along the streets in the dead of night with a gun in my hand. I was thrilled from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet when Red permitted me to drill the "pete" when we went out on the fifth job. By God, I was never so happy in my life as I was the night I "stemmed" (drilled) my first "pete."

Along about this time my mind took a peculiar twist. Ambition seized me. I became dissatisfied. I began to dream of bigger things, bigger jobs, more money. I thought Red was too easily satisfied, too easy going. I had banks on my brain. I wanted to rob banks. I told Red about my ambition to rob banks.

"Let's go after bigger game, Red," I said to him one day. "What's the matter with taking a slam at a jug?"

Then he told me something that I didn't know.

"Can't rob banks with powder," he said, "bank petes are not like the fireproof petes in stores and post offices. They're chilled steel and they can't be drilled. A drill spins over the door like a top on a sheet of glass."

I recalled having read about old-time bank burglars, Jimmy Hope who robbed the Manhattan Bank in New York City, George White, Big Frank McCoy, Mark Shunburn and other underworld celebrities who had robbed banks all over the world. I thought Red was giving me "a bum steer." I spoke to him about the Manhattan and the Ocean Bank robberies.

"They were different boxes in those days," he replied. "They were key-lockers and fireproof petes. They could drill 'em and shoot 'em open with puff [powder]. You can't shoot these automatic time-lock petes open with powder, kid."

"Well, what about using dynamite?" I asked him.

"Dynamite isn't any better than powder unless you've got it confined," he replied, "and to get enough of it confined to blow open one of those automatic time-lockers, you got to do a lot of drilling and they can't be drilled."

I was discouraged and so for the time being I dismissed the idea of robbing jugs.

For six or seven months we operated throughout the states of Maryland, Delaware and Virginia. I was now a finished peter man. I could knock 'em off just as well as Red could. I could distinguish a front-locker from a back-locker. I could stem them, or punch them, or deck them. Now and then we ran across an old Lilly safe that could be punched. Explosives weren't necessary on a Lilly. All we had to do was knock off the combination dial with a chisel and a sledge hammer and drive back the spindle until it disconnected with the lock box mechanism. We seldom decked a pete. "Decking," incidentally, means drilling through the top of the safe.

It was in a little Virginia town that I bumped into my first underworld tragedy and lost my good old pal, "Rochester Red."

This town, which I shan't name, was a county seat twenty-five miles from a railroad back in the Blue Ridge mountains. Red and I sauntered into it in the fall when the County Treasurer was collecting taxes. Red had an idea that we would get a big bundle of coin out of this job. There was no bank in the town and since the County Treasurer had a huge vault, with an up-to-date Herring, Hall and Marvin vault door which could be drilled, we were sure that we were in for the biggest touch of our career.

"We ought to get ten gran," Red said, "and if we do we'll take a trip over to Europe. He must keep all his dough in that vault."

But there was one angle to this job, and a very important angle, that we hadn't considered—bloodhounds. We learned that the Sheriff had three of the best "dogs" in the state.

Now we had a hard get-away out of the town. We had to go twenty-five miles over the mountains to the railroad.

"If we get a tumble,"—Red was a little bit uneasy about that get-away,—"those dogs will run us down as sure as hell; but if we don't get a tumble we'll be all right."

I didn't approve of this job on account of the get-away and I told Red that I didn't.

"If we get a tumble while we're working, we'll never get away."

"You're right," he answered, "and unless we can dope out a way to fool those mutts, we've got to pass up this job."

"Know any way to fool 'em?"

"Yes," he replied, "I know a way if I had the stuff."

"What stuff?"

"Oil of mustard," he went on; "if we can get about three ounces of oil of mustard, we can fool all the bloodhounds in the world."

He said that no dog could follow an oil of mustard scent over five yards without sniffing his head off.

On the night of the robbery we kicked in the drug store before we went to the County Treasurer's office and stole a bottle of oil of mustard.

Red tore up four pieces of cloth. He tied one to each of his shoes. I did the same, though I didn't know what it was all about until he explained.

"Now when we come out," he said, "we walk about a quarter of a mile before we saturate these rags with the oil of mustard. The bloodhounds will not trail us over five or ten yards after they've got a few whiffs of the dope; it paralyzes their sense of smell."

Stemming the vault door was a two-man job and when we had completed it, I stepped out while Red prepared to shoot it. If the explosion on the vault door didn't wake up the natives, we were all right for shooting the pete. They would never hear the pete shots because we could shut the vault door when we touched it off. The vault door lock-box dropped with a thud and the explosion was unusually loud. A dog barked ferociously and a party raised a window across the street a few seconds after the explosion occurred. We waited fifteen or twenty minutes before we went to work on the pete inside

the vault. I stood watch outside in front of the courthouse while Red prepared the pete.

"All right?" he came to the window. "I've got her ready."

"Let her go," I said.

B-O-O-M, there came a muffled roar and once again the window across the street went up. I crouched down behind the steps until the party closed the window. He had heard the explosion, but evidently he didn't know that it was an explosion or where it came from and he probably went back to bed. I waited for Red. Five minutes went by.

"What the hell's keeping him?" I soliloquized, knowing that it required only two or three minutes to "break down the flunk," jimmy the strong box loose from its fastenings. I crept up the big steps and entered the County Treasurer's office. The office was filled with powder fumes.

"Red! Ho, Red!" I shouted.

No response.

I dashed over to the vault and pulled the door open. A wave of powder smoke almost suffocated me. I flashed my light. What a scene my eyes rested on! Red was stretched out on the floor of the vault in a pool of blood. Blood and brains were scattered all over the floor and the walls of the vault. The safe door was lying on Red's neck and chest. His face was horribly mutilated. He was a corpse, dead as a doornail. He had probably used an unusually short fuse and an unusually dry one and after he had lighted it the explosion occurred before he could get away from the front of the safe.

As I look back now on that scene, it seems to me that I was terribly cold blooded. I stepped over Red's body, broke down the "flunk" and frisked the pete from top to bottom. Then I frisked Red's pockets, taking out everything which might enable the authorities to identify him. I tore the sweatband out of his hat, took his initialed watch and chain, what letters he had and the bottle of oil of mustard, and then I beat it over the mountains to the railroad. There was nothing that I could do. I didn't know any of his relatives and I couldn't very well endanger myself by trying to give him a decent burial. I had to leave him on the crime trail where I found him! Poor Old Rochester Red, a good guy and a game one! He died as he had lived. Too bad he had that kink in his brain!

For a while I was lost, almost helpless without him. I missed him tremendously. Our relationship was something more than that of crook and crook: he was more like a dad to me. There was a lot of the man in him even though he had spent all of his life in the crime world. He had tried to steer me straight. That, in my opinion, indicated that he was not altogether bad, and that he had character of a sort.

I wandered up through Virginia after Red's death. I visited the hang-out in Richmond, where I met some of his old cronies, among whom were "Dayton Danny" and "High Card Mike." Red had introduced Danny and Mike to me when we were in Baltimore. Danny was a curious character. When I told him about Red's death he cried like a baby and then he said:

"I'll go see the buck [priest] to-morrow and have a Mass said for him; he was a good thief and a good fellow. God have mercy on his soul."

And the next day he went to one of the Catholic churches in Richmond and gave the priest $20 and asked him to say a Mass for "his old friend Redmond Rochester."

I doubled up with Mike and Danny for a safe-robbing jaunt through northern Virginia. Our first job was in Louise Court House, a little burg on the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad, if I remember straight.

Before we entered the town that night Danny pulled out his rosary beads and began to say his prayers. I laughed at him, but he went on praying and when he had finished he proceeded to give me a lecture.

"Never laugh at a man who prays," he said, "because when you do that you're laughing at God."

"You pray to God," I said to him, "and then you go out and knock off a pete. Will God protect you?"

"I've been stealing for twenty-five years," he went on, "and never served a day, never even been glomed [arrested], so I guess the old Master has heard my prayers. Get the habit, kid, and I'll guarantee that it won't do you no harm."

"Danny," I laughed at him, "you're bugs."

"Yeh?" He glared at me.. "Well—I've seen mugs croaked [killed] all around me on jobs, but none of the shots ain't hit me yet, old timer."

"Then you believe that you've escaped arrest and dodged bullets simply because God has been with you all the time?"

"Absolutely," he snapped, "absolutely. If y' pray y' have good luck, and if y' don't y' have bad luck."

I tried to convince him that he was bugs and he tried to convince me that I was bugs for not believing as he believed and we argued the matter back and forth as we wandered uptown to the general store that we were going to knock off.

I went inside to help Danny on the peter. "High Card Mike" stood watch outside. Right over the pete there were fifteen or twenty horse collars hanging on a rack. The rack was made out of a thin piece of white pine board suspended from the ceiling and when the explosion occurred the rack broke at one end and the collars came sliding off the rack down on Danny's head when he got on his knees to jimmy the flunk. When the first horse collar hit him, he got up, but before he could get away from the front of the pete, another one crashed down on his head. They kept dropping on him until he was knocked out. Mike and I had to carry him out of the store across the street to a pump, under which we stuck his head and pumped water on him until he woke up.

"The old Master double-crossed y' that time, Danny," Mike giggled.

He looked at Mike, blinked his eyes and then he grunted:

"I couldn't have any better luck traveling with you haythens."

Every time I went out with Danny something happened. Not once during the two months that we were together did we shoot a pete without a rumble (accident). On every occasion the natives got wise to us and we had to fight our way out of town. And it was while I was with him that I was arrested for a crime, a safe blowing job at Columbia, Virginia, of which I was entirely innocent and sentenced to serve a term of two years. A dozen or more citizens swore that they had seen me in Columbia several days before the robbery and the afternoon of the night that the robbery occurred. I had never been in Columbia and when I protested that I was an innocent man the prosecutor looked at me and smiled and said:

"Well, you may be innocent of this charge, but think of all

the safes that you cracked for which you were never arrested."

Of course the prosecutor was right, but I tried to convince him that he was wrong and so did my lawyer, old Judge Houston, a Southern gentleman with an awful appetite for corn licker. When the Court announced that he and the jury were ready to hear the arguments, the Judge leaned over and whispered in my ear:

"John, I think a drink or two will put me in good shape for my argument to the jury."

I slipped him the price and away he went. He came back bleary-eyed and tongue-tied and proceeded to tell the jury that while I was a self-confessed safe cracker—which I wasn't, for I had lied like a trooper on the witness stand—nevertheless I was a good boy and if they sent me to prison they would make a bad boy out of me. The Judge, unconsciously, helped to convict me:

"Send this yere po' No'then boy back to his mama," he shouted in a deep bass.

They sent me to prison.

The Government prison at Atlanta hadn't been completed; therefore I was placed in the Tennessee State Prison at Nashville to serve the two years. The Warden, I think his name was Hartford, was the toughest egg that I ever met. He never smiled at a convict and he had an assistant, the whipping boss, nicknamed "Big Sam, by the cons, who was a barbarian from the top of his big bald head to the bottoms of his big flat feet. Sam stood around six feet seven inches and weighed about two hundred and fifty. He had a long, flowing, walrus mustache, stubby, nicotine-stained teeth, huge pop eyes, and a voice like the roar of a lion. Both Sam and the Warden were psalm singers. They never missed the services in the prison chapel of a Sunday and the voice of the former could be heard clear and high above the voices of the fifteen hundred convicts when they sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul, Let Me to Thy Bosom Fly."

They were astonishingly devout and reverent on Sundays, but from Monday morning till Saturday night they were "hell a mile." Sam's favorite expression was:

"Religion on Sunday and the leather on Monday."

He loved to beat convicts and especially "No'theners" or

Yankees, as he sometimes termed us boys from above the Mason and Dixon line.

"I hates a Yankee burglar like pizen," he said to me the first time I was dragged up before him for fighting with a prisoner over a package of cigarettes that he had stolen out of my cell.

He laid the "leather" on my bare hide that day until I fainted. He hit me twenty-five licks. Then he took me off a comparatively easy job in the box factory and sent me over to the toughest job in the prison—making skillets in the foundry. All the prison industries were under the dominion of contractors, a gang of bloodsuckers who worked the half-fed convicts like slaves. They worked us from seven in the morning until six at night. We had a half hour for dinner, which invariably consisted of black-eyed pea soup, corn bread, white, greasy-looking and shivering "sowbelly," and coffee minus milk or sugar. I was a lover of sweet potatoes before I landed in the Tennessee "stir," but before I got out of the joint I couldn't look a sweet spud in the face.

I realized at once that I was in a prison that could make Sing Sing look like a kindergarten so far as brutalities were concerned, so I very naturally decided to watch my step. I tried to be good. I worked like hell to accomplish the task that the contractors set out for me and I was just barely able to make the grade.

There were some men in the foundry who were physically unable to do the task, one of whom I recall very distinctly. He was a safe cracker. His name was Thomas Fallon, alias "Frisco Skinny." Skinny was rightly named. He was about five feet, three inches high and weighed about ninety-five pounds.

He was tubercular and in addition to that he had a very bad case of syphilis. Nevertheless, he washed and bathed and ate where all the rest of us washed and bathed and ate. The screws (guards) weren't very much concerned about a perfectly healthy man having contact with a fellow who was rotten with syphilis.

Skinny was a pathetic-looking poor devil. There was something about the fellow's voice and his general demeanor that got me. And he had a peculiar walk. The first day I was

in the foundry I observed that peculiar gait of his. He shuffled along with his legs spread apart. It seemed that it was a terrific exertion for him to move.

"What's wrong with that fellow?" I asked a convict with whom I worked.

"Dey's beat him so much that he's all raw in d' legs and back. Dat Big Sam has beat dat poor white boy every day for the past month."

"What for?" I was curious.

"Because he don't do no task," the prisoner said.

"For Christ's sake," I gasped, "they beat him because he can't do the task?"

"Yes," the con drawled, "dey beats everybody that don't do no task."

I was in the foundry a week. Every afternoon at four o'clock Big Sam, the yellow-hearted barbarian, came into the foundry and stopped at Skinny's bench.

"Do that there task to-day, you little son of a bitch?" he would snarl.

"No, sir," Skinny invariably replied, "I tried to do it, but couldn't. I think I'll be able to do it now in a few days."

I could see that Skinny was licked, broken, by the manner in which he addressed the big whipping boss. On more than one occasion I thought:

"Why in the hell does he talk to him that way? Why in the hell doesn't he get a knife and cut the big bum's heart out or knock his brains out of his head with that shovel he's got in his hands?"

Skinny would plead with him.

"I wish you wouldn't whip me to-day, Captain. I think I'll be able to do the task after while. I'm trying to do it, Captain, honest I'm trying hard."

And the whipping boss never failed to snort:

"Y' been tellin me that, God damn y', fer near two months and y' ain't done that there task yet and if I let y' git away with it all the rest of these God damn convicts in this yere foundry will be doing the same. Come on with me, by God, until I give y' a little leather."

I do not generalize on Sam's language. I quote his speeches word for word as he said them. I heard them day in and day

out for nearly two years, and I'll never forget them. Everything that I set down about Big Sam and the Warden of the Tennessee State Prison is the truth in every particular and I stand ready at any time to go into a court and swear to it. Years ago when I first started in writing I referred to "Frisco Skinny" in a magazine story. Governor Peay of Tennessee read the story. He wrote me for details. I gave them to him. I was hoping that he would invite me down to Tennessee to talk with me about the dirtiest and one of the worst prisons in the United States. But he didn't.

Let's go back to "Frisco Skinny" and "Big Sam," the barbarian.

One day I talked with Skinny. I thought possibly that he was one of those bull-headed and highly obstinate crooks that would rather be beaten to death than do the task.

"Skinny," I said to him, "why don't you do the task? Try to do it. You can't stand up under this daily slugging. They'll kill you."

"God Almighty," he shook his head and his eyes filled up with tears, "I've been trying to do it and I can't. I can't do it. I'm not able to do it."

"On the level now, Skinny, can't you do it?"

"May God paralyze me, Jack, I can't do it."

Well—the average reader who knows nothing about prisons may say, What about the prison doctor? What did he do? If Skinny was tubercular and syphilitic why didn't the doctor order him to the hospital? The prison doctor didn't do a thing but look on. He was a grafter. Every prison doctor that I have ever known was a grafter and a dog in his heart. I've gone to them when I was so sick that I couldn't stand on my feet and they gave me pills. Every prison doctor that I've ever known was cruel and an "organization man." If he weren't an organization man, if he didn't keep the sick convicts at work and out of the hospital, he couldn't hold the job. If a convict in the Tennessee Prison had money he could get any job he wanted and when I learned this I bought my way out of the foundry. I paid a hundred and fifty dollars a month for a soft job. I paid fifty dollars a month for special diet— ham and eggs, steaks, cream and sugar, good coffee, pies and cakes, cigars and *booze*. I was informed, though I

don't state this as a fact, that Big Sam, the Warden and the prison doctor split this revenue three ways. "Frisco Skinny" didn't have a bank roll, so he had to stand the gaff of poor food, day in and day out beatings and the abuse of the blood-sucking contractors!

And every Sunday the minister came in and preached the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth! Every Sunday Big Sam and the Warden led the convicts in "Jesus, Lover Of My Soul, Let Me to Thy Bosom Fly."

Every Sunday the minister would start his sermon with a phrase that never failed to get a laugh out of me. He was a little anemic looking man of five feet three or four, with a head about as big as a billiard ball, and a forced, unnatural smile on his face. He was dry and dull and I particularly detested him simply because he never failed to invoke "divine guidance for the good men who managed the prison." He was a terrible faker, and not at all concerned about how the good men who managed the prison were treating the prisoners.

When he mounted the pulpit the dead, expressionless smile would spread over his little bony face and then came the phrase to which I have referred:

"So glad to see all you men here this beautiful Sunday morning."

I told "Frisco Skinny" one day that he should march right up to him in the chapel, pull down his trousers, lift up his shirt and show the preacher his hips and legs and back, which were a mass of festered sores from the terrible beatings that the psalm-singing whipping Boss had given him.

"Tell him how they have beaten you," I suggested; "he'll have to listen to you and who knows but that he may do something for you."

Skinny was, as I said before, broken, licked, down for the count. He had lost his guts. He refused to do what I wanted him to do.

"He's a faker," he protested, "and it wouldn't do any good. They'd only beat hell out of me and I'm not able to stand much more beating."

I was determined to inform this minister about "the good men who managed the prison," so I wrote him a letter and

got one of the prison trusties to mail it. The following Sunday when he mounted the pulpit he referred to the letter.

"God," he said, "works in strange and mysterious ways to bring about our redemption from sin and if I were in this prison I would consider anything that happened to me in the nature of an act of God, as a punishment for my sins or as a means by which he was trying to bring me back to his throne and to a realization of how unworthy I had been for all that he has done for me. I hope the writer of that letter and the young man about whom it was written will take to heart what I have said. Nothing that can happen to us on this earth should worry us. We should consider everything that happens to us in the nature of a trial to test our love for the Master." He quoted scripture. He referred to the crucifixion of Jesus on Calvary and then he concluded his talk with:

"Let's all stand and sing 'There is a Fountain Filled with Blood Drawn from Immanuel's Veins, and Sinners Plunged beneath That Flood Lose All Their Guilty Stains.'"

I didn't sing and neither did "Frisco Skinny." Big Sam and the Warden roared the hymn enthusiastically. And the next day, Monday, they hurled the leather on the hides of the convicts enthusiastically. What men they were!

They beat "Frisco Skinny" the next day for failing to do the task. The following morning, Tuesday, when he came into the foundry he told me that he was all through trying to do the task.

"I'm going to jimmy [cripple] myself, Jack," he said. "I'm tired of being sapped for not doing the task."

"What are you going to do?"

"Wait," he replied, "and y'll see."

About three o'clock that afternoon, a half hour or so before Big Sam's appearance, Skinny filled up his ladle with white-hot molten iron. I stood close by watching him. I was wondering just how he was going to "jimmy" himself. I moved over to the other end of my bench to get a shovel. When I turned my head, there was Skinny pouring the ladle of molten iron down the leg of his boot. I dashed over to him, but I was too late. He had emptied the ladle into the boot leg and was screaming with pain. The stench of burning flesh sickened me! He staggered around for a minute or two and then

he collapsed, and while he was lying on the floor the boot took fire. I threw a shovel full of sand on him, extinguishing the flame, after which I picked him up and carried him over to the water trough and dropped him into it. "Frisco Skinny" never did any more work in the Tennessee State Prison. When they pulled the boot off his leg, there was nothing left but the remnants of a charred leg-bone. He went out of the "stir" a cripple for life!

I left the Tennessee State Prison hating everybody connected with the place from the preacher down to the guards on the wall. There is a widespread belief that tough prisons are a deterrent, that crooks fear them and give the states that have them a wide berth. Please note the effect that the Tennessee "stir" had on me, a comparatively ordinary crime man of about four years experience. I repeat that I hated everybody connected with the prison when I was discharged. I thought the people of Tennessee must be a hard-hearted lot to maintain such an institution; therefore, I concluded to remain in the state until I had "broke even" with them for what they did to men in their prison.

I couldn't leave the "Volunteer State" until I had wrecked a few "petes" and I was determined to wreck a few "bulls" (cops or detectives) if they got in my way while I was wrecking the petes. What I thought of Tennessee, its prison and its citizens wouldn't look well in print, I assure you.

I had a little money when I was released and the first thing I did was to buy a gun, a couple of drills and some powder. Then I beat it up into the northern part of the state, intending to start my campaign in that section.

The morning after my release from the prison I got off a freight train at Tullahoma, Tennessee. It was about four o'clock.

"I'll start in right here," I thought.

I crossed the tracks and headed for the town. I heard the babble of voices. I stopped and listened. It seemed to me that there was a crowd talking. They were cursing and jabbering in an excited manner and presently I heard somebody say:

"They sure as hell came this way; there's no doubt about that."

"They sure did a good job on that old bank vault," I heard another fellow yell.

I immediately decided that Tullahoma was no place for me, so I started to sneak back to the freight train, and as I did, the gang of citizens came after me shooting and shouting:

"Halt, halt, halt!"

I ran, but they finally got so close to me that I stopped and surrendered. I ditched the drills, powder and my gun before they came up to me.

They were an infuriated gang of hooziers.

"Put up yer hands," three or four of them shouted simultaneously, "and don't move or we'll kill y'."

I raised my hands in the air.

"Here's one of 'em, boys," a wild devil roared as he rammed his shotgun in my ribs.

"Where's that rope, George? Git that rope," somebody screamed.

"What the hell's up here?" I shouted when they began to talk about the rope.

"Ha, you damn rascal," the leader of the gang snarled, "y' don't know what's up, eh? Y' don't know, eh? Well—when we git done with y', y'll never rob another bank or kill another officer."

The mob surged around me and then they slipped the rope around my neck. At that moment it seemed to me that everything I had done in my life, everything I had thought and felt and seen, flashed across the screen of my imagination. I thought of my mother and father, sisters and brothers, the priests and sisters, the reform school. The perspiration was running down my face and back in torrents and I was quaking like an aspen. One fellow elbowed his way through the crowd with a lantern in his hand. He raised it and held it up to my face.

"Not much more than a kid," he grunted.

"Mister," I cried, "I'm not a bank robber. I didn't rob no bank."

"Where was y' night before last?" he asked me. "There was a bank robbed at Manchester night before last and a policeman killed."

"Ah, hell," somebody shouted, "he's one of 'em. Toss that rope over that telegraph pole."

"Night before last?" Fear automatically passed away. "I was in the State Prison at Nashville. I didn't get out until yesterday morning."

"He's a damn liar. Toss that rope over the telegraph pole and let's swing him."

"Y' were in the State Prison?" the man with the lantern exclaimed. "Well, the Warden's here. We'll see if yer telling the truth and if yer not, yer name's mud, young feller."

"Come on," they dragged me along to town with the rope still around my neck. "We'll see if the Warden knows y'."

They led me up to the hotel and got the Warden out of bed. At that moment I thought he was the finest looking man I had ever seen and the best friend I had ever had. He took one look at me and smiled and then he spoke:

"Hello, Kelly," he said. "Yes," he addressed the crowd, "he couldn't have been in on this affair at Manchester, because he wasn't released until Monday morning. He's all right, boys, turn him loose."

They took the rope off my neck.

"Kelly,"—the Warden was still smiling at me,—"I'll bet that's the narrowest damn escape from death that you ever had or ever will have, ain't it?"

"You said it, Warden." My teeth were chattering.

CHAPTER VI

NITROGLYCERINE COMES INTO VOGUE

THE Tullahoma mob scared me, but they didn't drive me out of the "Volunteer State." I forgot all about the scare when I got away from them and the old determination to break even with the people of Tennessee was just as strong as ever. I managed to pick up my gun, drills and powder before I boarded another freight train bound for Chattanooga, where I met "Dayton Danny" again. I told him about my escape from the gang at Tullahoma.

"If ye said a prayer once in a while," Danny declared, "ye would have better luck."

I told him that I thought that I had very, very good luck at Tullahoma.

"I was lucky, Danny," I said, "that the Warden was in the town. If he hadn't been there they would have lynched me sure as hell."

He and I made Chattanooga our headquarters for six months, during which time we knocked off four or five petes. He was still a very devout Catholic, never failing to say his rosary before he went out on a job and never failing to give a fair portion of his part of the money to either a priest, a sister of charity or to some other charitable organization. He had a passion for picking up poor kids on the street and taking them into a store to buy them clothes and toys. Danny had a heart in him as big as a barrel!

All told I spent about two years with him. He never missed Mass during that time. The first thing he did when he got up in the morning, whether it was in the jungles on a get-away or in a hotel, was to pray. The conviction that he could steal forever so long as he prayed ultimately became an obsession with him. He took chances that the ordinary crook wouldn't think of taking and then later on in his career he grew ambitious and desperate. He was not desperate to the extent of

taking human life. That was a sacred thing with him and he frequently told me that the only reason that he ever carried a gun was to intimidate people. During the two years that I was with him he never fired his gun once. He was forever cautioning me about shooting.

"It isn't necessary to shoot off your gun whenever somebody shouts hands up," he would rave. "Just get the drop on your man and he'll do what ye want him to do."

Danny and I were the first cracksmen to discover the use of nitroglycerine for bank work. I don't mean to say that we were the first in this country to use it. I mean that we were the first crooks in the Eastern and Southern country to use it on banks. Several "mobs" in the Western states had been using it before we picked it up, and there's an interesting story or two around our first experiences with "soup" (nitro).

We didn't know how to make it and we couldn't buy it and we didn't know how to use it, but we had learned that dynamite was nothing more than nitroglycerine and some other ingredients which were used to compress it into stick form. Merchants were getting to the stage of the game where they wouldn't leave much money in their old fireproof petes because there had been so many safe robberies. Further, the steel safes were becoming quite common. Most everybody was getting them. They were supposed to be burglar-poof and they were so long as the cracksmen used drills and powder. We were about to be confronted with a scarcity of work—no safes to crack. A long period of unemployment confronted all of us in the underworld if we didn't get busy. The safe manufacturer was outthinking us, about to drive us out of business. It was an alarming situation.

Danny and I visited the libraries day after day, reading books on chemistry until we learned that we could extract nitroglycerine from the dynamite stick with the aid of hot water. Getting the dynamite was a comparatively easy matter. We stole boxes of it out of stone quarries. And in the quarries we also got detonating caps and fuses. We knew that "grease" (nitroglycerine) was exploded by concussion. The fuse ignited and set off the cap, the explosion of the cap exploding the glycerine. Now that we had mastered all that, we

were still up against a problem, namely, how much we should use for one shot.

"When we git this stuff down foine," Danny would say, "we'll give the banks hell and we'll git a poile of money."

Banks! Bank burglars! I was thrilled to death. Not quite twenty-three and I was about to become a bank burglar! I wouldn't have exchanged places with a king! Consequence and penalty never entered my mind. My mind didn't work that way in those days. I never thought about capture. Prisons didn't concern me at all and I had been in two of the toughest in the United States. No crook that I have ever known ever thought about capture or penalties.

Well, Danny and I decided to do a little experimenting with the "soup."

"If it takes five ounces of powder to blow a pete," I suggested, "it ought to take about three ounces of soup to blow one."

Danny agreed with me, but he was a cautious soul; therefore he declared that we would pick out some easy mark, try out the three ounces to a shot before we ventured into the big game—banks with their automatic time-locking petes and their impregnable-looking vault doors. We selected a coal and lumber yard office in the suburbs of Chattanooga. It was an ideal location, not a house within a mile of it. There was a big double-door Mosler safe in the office. We knocked off the combination, poured three ounces of "grease" in the aperture, lighted the fuse and then dashed outside to wait for results. Such results! Such a noise!

First there came a blinding blue-white flash followed by an indescribable roar. The door of the office came skimmering out on the street. The windows were blown to smithereens. The building rocked for a second or two and then tumbled over with a deafening crash. We were sure that the natives in Chattanooga, two miles away, must have heard the noise, so Danny and I didn't stop to investigate.

"Three ounces of that stuff is enough to blow up the Brooklyn Bridge," he said.

After we had knocked off four or five more petes we learned that a teaspoonful would do infinitely more damage than five ounces of "puff" (powder). A teaspoonful for a shot on a

steel pete. A tablespoonful for a shot on a vault door. Three ounces for an entire bank job—ten or twelve shots. We had mastered the use of grease. Now for the banks.

We had to have another man for bank jobs, a good outside man—a fellow who wouldn't do a hundred yards in nothing if he saw a mob of natives coming down the main street. Good outside men, fellows who will stand pat and fight to the last ditch, are few and far between and Danny succeeded in getting one of the best in the business when he landed "Frisco Eddie."

Danny wanted to ramble up into the State of Virginia, but I protested that we stay in Tennessee. I was still sore at the "Volunteer State." I didn't think I had broken even with it yet. Danny consented to stage our first bank robbery in Tennessee. You will pardon me if I omit the name of the town. I don't think the folk down there are very sympathetically disposed toward an ex-convict, and I have a hunch that they might conclude to make it warm for me if they should ever get anything on me. The name of the town is relatively unimportant.

It was situated in the heart of the cotton belt. Cotton brought fabulous prices that year. The banks were in a healthy condition. This bank that we were interested in was in an unusually healthy condition. The town newspaper contained the very interesting information that it had "Cash on hand.....$50,000."

We went about planning the job very carefully. For weeks before we went up against it we had looked into every important detail. We had located the blacksmith shop where we were going to get our tools. We had tabbed the movements of the negro night watchman, tabbed the arrival and departure of trains, freight and passenger and had also planned a cross-country get-away, the best in the world. Stupid police officers always look for cracksmen up and down the railroad. The cracksman never goes up or down the railroad. He invariably goes across the country to another railroad; therefore, the stupid officers never catch him on the get-away.

We had spent a month or more looking for this mark. We found it in the latter part of September, but we couldn't kick it in when we found it, for the very good reason that Septem-

ber is a very bad month for robbing banks. Bad because the nights are fairly warm and short. The bank robber must have long nights and cold ones, when people sleep under the covers and when the windows are not wide open. The colder they are and the more blustery they are, the better we like it. There are a lot of brave men who will get out of their beds on a warm night to chase a burglar who wouldn't even turn over on a cold night. Further, explosions are not so easily detected on a cold, windy night when the elements are raging. Ninety per cent of the banks that I have robbed on cold winter nights have been robbed without waking up the residents of the town. On the other hand, every time I have tried to "knock off a jug" in the summer I have failed.

The night that we arrived in Blankville was a pip. The thermometer was dangling around twenty above zero—very cold weather for Tennessee. The wind was howling a gale. There was no stool pigeon (moon) shining in the heavens and neither were there any stars glittering. The sky was black. The gods were good to us and Danny, as usual, said his prayers as we headed into the wind on our way to the blacksmith shop to get our tools.

The next move was to round up the big nigger night policeman. We knew he was there. We had to find him and stick him up before we went near the jug. Danny and Eddie took one side of the Main Street and I took the other. The street was about forty-five feet wide. It was understood that we were to keep tabs on each other. If they met the coon they were to "elevate" him (hold him up) and signal me if I didn't see them and I was to signal them if I met the big colored gentleman. Now it was rumored that this coon was "a bad egg." Townfolk said he would fight his weight in wildcats. He was big enough to fight his weight in elephants. He stood around six feet three and weighed about two hundred and seventy-five. He was one of those coal black babies.

We prowled the "Main Drag" looking for him for approximately an hour. We couldn't find him. We didn't want to go to work on the bank until we got him. Up and down the street we went. No colored officer in sight anywhere.

"He's under cover some place," Eddie suggested. "Maybe

he's over in the railroad station or at the town calaboose."

We went to the calaboose first. He wasn't there. Then we started for the railroad station. When we got within a block of it we saw him cross the street. We met him in the middle of the block.

"Are you the night officer?" I asked him as we gathered around him.

"Dat's me," he grunted defiantly.

We leveled our guns at him.

"Now put your hands up," Danny spoke to him, "and keep 'em up or yer liable to git yer bloody block blown off."

I took his big gun out of his hip pocket. Then he began to talk.

"White folks," his voice was trembling, "what's y' all mean to do?"

"Come with us," I told him, "and you'll find out very soon."

We led the way with the man who could lick his weight in wildcats down the Main Stem to the jug.

The bank was on a corner right across the street from the railroad station. We tied his ankles together with picture wire, tied his hands behind his back and sat him on the station platform directly in front of the bank. "Frisco Eddie" stood close by him while Danny and I jimmied open the bank door. The boogie made no comment until we made the first shot on the vault door. It was a loud shot. From where he was sitting he could see the reddish blue-white flash which preceded the explosion.

"Lordy," he gasped, "lordy!"

"Don't be afraid, George," Danny consoled him, "y' won't be hurt."

The first shot on the automatic-time-lock, burglar-proof safe was terrific. The big plate glass window in front of the bank came tumbling out. The big boogie grunted and rolled off the platform to the street.

"White folks," he mumbled, "please frow me under this yere platform."

Eddie and I picked him up and sat him on the platform again.

"Dese town folks and y' all is gone to go to shooting at

each other after while and this yere nigger gwan to git shot," he pleaded.

"Here, George," Eddie stuck an apple in his mouth, "take a bite out of that and keep quiet."

After every explosion he groaned and rolled off the platform. Ten times he hit the "grit."

It was the first time-lock safe that we had worked on. We had a terrible time before we got the "kiester" (burglar-proof chest in the bottom of the safe where the money is stacked) open. We had to make ten shots on it, blasting off a sheeting at a time. Danny and I were deathly sick from the soup fumes, which give one a terrific headache. It isn't necessary to explode it to get the headache. Just stick a bottle of it in your pocket and within ten minutes you will have one of those leaping headaches that will make you do the can can.

When we finished the job we carried the big boogie into the vault and tied him to a chair. Danny stuck three twenty dollar bills in his pocket.

"Here's a little tip fer y', George," he said to the officer. "Buy the woife a dress and don't give it to the banker."

We beat it down the railroad ten miles before day broke, when we entered the woods to divide the proceeds and wait for night. We dumped the coin on the ground and counted it. $67,000 in cash, gold, bills and silver and around $30,000 in jewels!

Here was more money than I had ever seen before. I had over $22,000 for my share of the cash in addition to a "bit" out of the jewels. I counted it over and over again, played with it, fingered it, fondled it. I felt that feverish excitement that was my substitute for happiness. I planned what I was going to do with all that money. First of all I thought of Mom.

"I'll beat it right up to Boston," I thought, "and dump all this in her lap. I'll buy her the best sealskin coat in the city. She always wanted a sealskin coat and now she'll have it. I'll buy her a home. I'll send my sisters to a private school. I'll buy them a lot of fine clothes; by God I'll fix Mom and the girls up in great style."

But then it occurred to me that we hadn't made our getaway yet. There was still a possibility of being captured. I

was nervous. I wanted to get to Boston with that bank roll. I wanted to see Mom. I hadn't seen her in seven or eight years, hadn't seen her since the day they took me to the reform school. The thought that she might be dead depressed me. Here is where I uttered a fervent prayer. I prayed to God that I would find her living when I got home. I was wondering what she looked like and whether she had changed very much. I remembered clearly the dump in Silver Alley that we called home. I wondered if they were still living there. I wondered if all my sisters were alive and my kid brother Willie.

"God Almighty," I murmured to myself, "I hope Mom and all the family are alive."

I wanted to give her a thrill. I intended to tell her that I was in the cotton-buying business and that I was a rich man or on my way to being a rich man.

"She'll be proud of me," I thought.

I could see her talking to all the Irish neighbors in Silver Alley about "me b'y Jackie." I could see her strutting down the street with that sealskin coat on.

"God," I prayed again, "let me get home with this bank roll and I'll never rob another bank!"

We were planted near a coaling station and a water tank where all freights stopped. Finally night came. I was still nervous. I had the money stuck all over my person, in my pockets, inside my shirt. I had bundles of twenties, tens, fifties, hundreds, fives, ones and twos strapped to my body. Danny and Eddie had planted some of their money, intending to return for it later on and they tried to persuade me to plant part of mine.

"Nothing doing," I told them, "all this dough goes with me."

About ten o'clock we crept out of the woods. A flurry of snow was falling and before a freight pulled up to the water tank a blizzard was raging. A cross-country get-away was out of the question now. We decided to grab the freight train. We crawled in an empty car and away we went toward the town where we had robbed the bank.

"Hope she don't stop in that burg," Eddie said when we got on the train.

"She won't stop," Danny said.

When she neared the edge of the town the engine roared one long blast, a stop signal.

"She's stopping," Danny said.

And she was. We could hear the brakes being applied. My old heart was beating like a trip hammer when the train came to a standstill. We peered out. We were right in front of the station. We could see the bank. We could hear the natives talking about the robbery. I was ready to collapse.

"I'll never get to Boston with this bank roll," I thought. "I'll never see Mom. This is the finish."

"It's a local," Danny said. "Guess she's going to switch a few cars."

The brakeman was fooling around the rear end of the car that we were in. He disconnected it. The train pulled up the track and then backed down. They switched the car that we were in on the siding right in front of the bank! Danny and Eddie were cursing to beat the band. I was huddled up in the corner of the John O'Brien (box car) with my gun in my hand. I was expecting somebody to throw the car door open at any minute and I was determined to put up a battle.

"I'm going to Boston with this bank roll," I thought, "or die right here."

It was a terribly cold night; nevertheless I was perspiring and my stomach was trembling. We heard the town hall clock strike eleven, then twelve and finally one. The streets were deserted. Suddenly we saw the big boogie walking down the "Main Drag." He had a shot gun thrown over his shoulder. We decided to move. We dropped out of the car one by one and started down the track toward the coal shutes. About three o'clock we caught a train going the other way, away from the scene of the robbery. I danced an Irish jig when I got on that train. Before day broke again we were seventy-five miles away, out of Tennessee. The following night we boarded a passenger train for Norfolk. I bought an outfit of new clothes in Norfolk and two bags into which I stuffed the bank roll, and then I grabbed "a rattler" for Boston.

I arrived in Boston around nine in the evening of December 19th. I'll never forget that date. It was one of the happiest nights of my life. I hailed a taxi and beat it out to Silver

Alley. The old shack was still there. It was the same neighborhood. It hadn't changed a bit in eight years. There was a light burning in the front room. I took a slant under the curtain. My eyes filled up with tears. I wanted to cry. Mom was sitting in the parlor. Three of my sisters were there. Mom had changed. She looked a hundred to me. Her hair was white now. It was just turning gray when I had left, eight years back. I was depressed and happy—depressed when I thought of how she had suffered, what she had undergone and how she had changed, and happy when I thought of what I would be able to do for her now that I was well heeled with dough. I couldn't go in right away. I had been crying and I didn't know whether they were tears of joy or tears of sorrow. I took a hold on myself and knocked on the door.

Mom came to the door.

"Does Mrs. Callahan live here?" I wanted to see if she would recognize me.

"Yes," she said, "I'm Mrs. Callahan."

"You are?" I smiled at her.

"Yes,"—she was looking me over from head to foot,—"I'm Mrs. Callahan."

Then one of my sisters, Gertrude, came out to the door.

My mother moved toward me. I was smiling. She came close and looked me in the eyes and then she burst into tears, screaming the while:

"Glory be to God, it's me dear b'y Jackie, me dear b'y Jackie." She threw her arms around my neck, weeping like a broken-hearted child. "Ah, me b'y. Thanks be to God! Glory be to God! He sent ye back to me. I knew ye would come back to me."

I held her in my arms. She was kissing me and patting me on the back and I was loving her to death. She was sobbing pathetically. I was crying like a big kid. I tried to hold myself in check, but it was useless. I was so damn happy!

"I must fix ye a nice cup of tay," she said when she had regained her composure.

I went out into the kitchen with her. She began shooting questions at me.

"Where have ye been, Jackie? What have ye been doing, darling? Have ye been attending to yer duties? Been to

Mass, confession and communion?" and a million other inquiries.

"I've been down South, Mom." I hadn't opened up the bags that held the money. "Been in the cotton-buying business and I'm making a lot of money. I haven't missed Mass in five years. I go every Sunday. I go to communion once a month. I——"

"Thanks be to God," she blessed herself. "I knew ye would have good luck because ye were a good b'y to me."

"Look here, Mom," I opened up the bags and dumped the money on the kitchen table, "that's all for you. To-morrow I'm going to buy you the best sealskin coat in Boston. And I'm going to move you out of this dump into a real home. From now on, Mom, I'm going to see that you have the life of an Irish Queen."

"Good God!" she gasped when I dumped the money on the table. "Sure ye have the mint there on the table, Jackie. God bless me, me b'y, I never saw so much money in me life before. And it's in the cotton business ye are, are ye? It must be a foine business, Jackie."

She leaned over the table and began to finger the money.

"Maggie Cassidy will be crazy when I tells her that me b'y Jackie is a business man. Since Jimmy got into the fire department the divil himself can't stand her. It's my Jimmy this and my Jimmy that. I'm so tired of hearing her talk about her Jimmy. And she always asks me where you are and what yer doing. Ah—" she shook her head and smiled, "wait until she sees me with the sealskin coat on me shoulders."

What a happy Mom she was that night! And how happy I was!

The next day I took her out and bought the sealskin coat, a flock of black dresses, a gang of new bonnets and a lot of other things. I dressed her up from head to feet. The following day I hired an automobile and went house hunting. I bought her a nice home in the Dorchester section of Boston. I paid a substantial deposit on the home, furnished it from cellar to garret and moved her and the family into it within a week after my arrival in the city. For the first time in her life she was living at her ease! And so was I. Her joy was my joy. The fact that I had plundered a bank for the money

which enabled me to get the things that gave her happiness and relief from toil didn't give me any concern. Of course she would have been just as happy if I had come home empty-handed. And I grant you that I might have been much happier if I had earned the money.

I remained in Boston until after the holidays. I took Mom to Mass every Sunday. She got a great kick out of my going to Mass with her. She wanted her friends, Maggie Cassidy, Bridgie Carney, and all the rest of them from Silver Alley, to see her "b'y Jackie" and the new clothes, the sealskin coat and the new bonnets.

I went to confession and communion with her on Christmas morning. It didn't occur to me that I was guilty of a terrible sin by receiving communion when I had absolutely no intention of living on the level thereafter. Of course it wasn't the proper thing to do, but what did I care about that so long as it made Mom happy. I would have gone to Hell to make her happy! I had neglected her, had broken her heart. My father had given her a dog's life. I was determined that the rest of her days should be a song. I didn't confess to the priest that I was a bank burglar. If I had done that, it would have called for restitution, explanations and endless talk. The confessing of my sins was only a matter of form with me. As a matter of fact, I told the priest nothing but untruths.

I was just about broke when I left Boston. I had spent money like a drunken sailor. There was another payment of seven thousand dollars to be made on the house that I bought. I had arranged to send my sisters to school. I wanted my brother Eddie to study law. I had to get another bundle of dough to carry out my plans. I went back to Norfolk to meet Danny and Eddie. Mom had my "business" address in Norfolk. I had to have a business address, because she and my sisters wanted to write to me. I gave her the business address of a fence in Norfolk, Jerry Sullivan, an ex-crook. He received the mail and forwarded it to me.

I felt like a new man after the visit home. There was so much that I wanted to do for my mother and sisters and my brother Willie that I was more energetic and ambitious than ever before. I went right out of Norfolk looking for another robbable jug. I found one in Whiteville, South Carolina.

There isn't much to be said about the robbery. We just walked into the town one morning about two o'clock, knocked off the vault and the burglar-proof, automatic time-locking safe and walked away with $19,000, hardly enough to pay us for our trouble. I sent the balance of the house money to Boston. I wanted to get that off my mind before anything happened and I was happy when the home was in the clear.

Then I had a streak of hard luck and a number of narrow escapes from death. The first fizzle occurred in a certain big town in Virginia. The jug looked like a pipe. I had tabbed the town for three or four nights. The night officer always went home to supper at one-thirty, remaining there until two-thirty. He did that for four nights when I was watching him. We decided that we could get in the bank, knock it off and get away before he returned to duty at two-thirty.

The bank stood at the end of the main street. It was a beautiful location. Nine out of ten Southern banks are beautifully located! Often I have thought that the bankers must have consulted some bank burglar as to where, in the opinion of the burglar, the bank should be located. I know I couldn't have selected better myself.

Promptly at one-thirty we went to this bank. It was a one-story brownstone building with high windows, two in the front, three in the sides and two in the rear. As a precautionary measure, we glimmed up (flashed our light around) the interior of the bank for the purpose of seeing whether or not all was well. We went around the side from window to window and when we got in the rear we heard somebody walking on the sidewalk out front. We cut out the glimming and waited.

"Some nigger on his way home," Danny said.

Then we heard the party try the front door of the bank.

"It's a bull," Eddie whispered, "sure as hell."

We crouched down at the corner and peered around. Sure enough it was the night officer. He was coming toward us, trying the windows as he came on. Evidently he had seen the reflections of our flashlight while we were glimming up the jug.

We had our cannons in our hands waiting for him.

"We'll stick him up when he gets down here," Danny whispered.

He was a big, strapping fellow, powerfully built. We waited for him. He was at the last window. He came on. When he turned the corner of the building we jumped out on him.

"Get 'em up, quick," Danny commanded.

Eddie had his gun in the big cop's back. Danny had his under the cop's nose. I was on his right side. But he didn't put up his hands.

"Get 'em up, get 'em up," Danny punctuated the command with an oath.

The officer was breathing heavily. I saw that he was scared. I took his gun out of his hip pocket. He didn't move. He stood there rigid as a statue. Then he dropped to the ground in a dead faint, paralyzed with fright. We laughed at him. It was a unique spectacle—a fainting cop. For a moment we didn't know what to do.

"Get a bucket of water, Jack," Danny spoke to me.

There was a pump near by. I ran over to the pump and got a bucket of water and poured it over the cop's face. It revived him. He opened his eyes. We stood looking at him. Suddenly he got up on his feet and tore down the main street. Eddie, Danny and I went after him. He was yelling as he ran, yelling like a frightened animal.

At the end of the street there was a big hotel. There were fifteen or twenty steps leading up to the porch and glass doors at the entrance. He went up those steps in one leap and crashed through the glass doors. We were right at his heels, trying to grab him. We didn't want to lose him. There was a negro porter in the office. When he saw the cop coming and screaming, he, too, got up and began to scream. Between the two of them, they aroused everybody in the hotel, so we had to beat it out of town, pronto.

CHAPTER VII

SUPERSTITIONS AND PENALTIES

DANNY was a superstitious burglar. If he heard the cry of a cat before we went uptown to work on a bank, the whine of a dog or the lonely, forlorn wa-hoo, wa-hoo of an owl, it worried him and he never failed to rave about the evil significance of these things. Neither Eddie nor I saw anything portentous in the cry of the cats, the whine of the dogs or the screams of the owls, and every time Danny talked about these things we laughed at him. But one night something happened which dynamited my contempt for Danny's superstition and I, too, became a slave to the things that I had formerly laughed at and ridiculed as bunk and tommyrot. Danny eventually succeeded in making me superstitious.

We had drifted back into Tennessee after the fiasco with the fainting cop. We were living in Knoxville. Danny had discovered a soft mark in a town thirty-five miles out of Knoxville. He had spent a week in the town (a week of nights) looking the burg over and when he came back to Knoxville he was very enthusiastic about this particular jug.

"It's the softest thing I've seen in a long while," he told us; "there's only one night hack [cop] in the burg and he goes home at one in the morning and doesn't come out again until five. I watched him for seven nights. The town is dark after one in the morning, not a light on the main street."

It's very bad poker to ride into a town where you're going to rob a bank. Burglars seldom do that thing for the reason that a smart detective will invariably check up on the trains that arrived in the town prior to the robbery when he is investigating. If a crook rides a passenger train into the town where he's going to work, he takes an awful chance. It's a hundred to one that somebody on that train will identify him. Conductors, as a rule, are very observing. So are traveling

men. I know of one or two instances of safe blowers and bank burglars who have come to grief by riding into the towns where they operated.

Danny decided that we were not going to ride into this town.

"We'll split up on our way to that burg," he said. "Eddie can buy a ticket to the first town this side of it, Reevston, four miles away, while you and me can buy tickets to the first town on the other side of it which is about five miles away. We'll meet back in the town, down by the cannery."

So we did as Danny suggested. We left Knoxville about nine in the evening and if everything had gone all right we would have arrived at the scene of the intended robbery around ten. But the unexpected happened. We had engine trouble. The train didn't pull into the town where the bank was until midnight. If we went on to our destination, the town five miles away, and "hiked" back, we wouldn't have arrived at the cannery where we were to meet Eddie until two or three in the morning, too late to go to work on the jug.

"Let's take a chance and hop off here and save that five mile hike," Danny suggested, when the train pulled into the town where we were going to stage the robbery.

I consented. We sneaked off on the side opposite the station, ducked into the woods and waited until the rattler pulled out and the station platform was deserted. Then we walked up the track to the cannery, a mile away, where we were to meet Eddie, who had got off at Reevston. He came along about one o'clock.

We were sitting in a box car on the cannery siding. Suddenly Danny jumped up and went to the door. An owl was screaming: "Wa-hoo, Wa-hoo, Wa-hoo!"

"That's a sign of bad luck, b'ys, sure as hell," he said.

"Sit down, sit down and ferget about that stuff, Danny," Eddie replied. "Yer going nuts on the subject."

I laughed at Danny, and began to kid him.

"Say a prayer and maybe the owl will go away," I said to him.

The owl continued to howl. Danny paced the floor of the John O'Brien like a maniac, talking about the evil significance of the owl.

"'Tis bad luck," he declared, "bad luck."

At one-thirty we started for the town. All the way up the railroad track he continued to talk about the owl.

"I don't feel lucky to-night, b'ys," he said. "Them divils of owls have got me nervous."

We laughed at him and ridiculed his fears.

We turned into the main street. A big black cat tore across the street in front of us.

"Jasus," Danny stopped, "look at that, look at that! Did ye see that black cat?"

"Say," Eddie snarled at him, "are you going bugs altogether? What the hell difference does it make if an army of black cats cross our trail? Cut that guff about cats and owls or y'll have Jack and me nutty as yerself."

"I don't feel right, b'ys," he retorted, "I don't feel right."

We moved on.

"Wait a minute," he whispered, "wait a minute. I——"

"Oh—now what's up?" Eddie interrupted him.

"There's a light in front of the jug," Danny went on. "I was in this town for a week and ivery night at one o'clock the cop put out that light in front of the jug; something's queer about it burning to-night."

"The owls and cats have got y' seeing things, Danny," I said.

He protested that something was wrong.

"What can be wrong?" Eddie asked him.

"I don't know," Danny answered, "what can be wrong, but I don't like the idea of that light burning, that's all."

"Now, listen,"—Eddie was sore,—"I came here to knock off this jug and not to listen to a nutty harp like you peddling a lot of bunk about owls and black cats and lights. Come on, let's get busy, get to work."

"There might be something to that light burning, Eddie," I cut in; "so let's go up on this side of the street. If everything looks all right we can cross over to the jug and kick it in and go to work."

Danny thought that was the right move, so we went on. I stopped for a moment to tie my shoe. They were about ten yards ahead of me. They had arrived at the corner of the street. I was just passing the last store across the street from

the bank, when I suddenly heard a terrible commotion followed by a command of:

"Halt! Hands up!"

I turned. I saw the dim outlines of five or ten, possibly more, men with guns leveled at me. I was astonished. I couldn't think for the moment. I looked over at the bank building. There was a space of about ten feet between the bank building and a big store to the left. I was on a narrow sidewalk. I took the situation in at a glance. If I ran down that sidewalk, they had a bead on me and would probably kill me. My only get-away was across the street to the space between the bank and the big store. They would have a cross fire at me if I went that way, whereas on the narrow sidewalk they had a good mark. I unbuttoned my overcoat to get my gun out of my holster.

"Hands up?" I shouted to the mob. "What's the idea of stopping a citizen on the street at this hour in the morning and telling him to throw up his hands?"

"Ha, damn y'!" one of the mob shouted. "Y'all ain't citizens, yer bank robbers, yer——"

I didn't wait for the gentleman to finish his speech. I whipped out my gun and fired as I dashed across the street. They banged away at me. I could hear the bullets whizzing by my head. I headed into that space between the bank and the store like a streak of lightning. I stopped when I got in the rear of the bank. They evidently thought that I was still running. I peeked around the corner and fired at them. They ran back. I followed them, shooting in the air. They fell all over each other getting into the store.

From that night on I always listened to Danny when he talked about owls, cats and dogs. Whenever I heard an owl screaming, or saw a black cat or heard a dog whine, my mind went back to that eventful night in Tennessee.

How did the citizens know we were bank burglars? How did they know that we were coming to the town that night to rob the bank? We were very much concerned about these things when we were making our get-away out of the trap that night and we got the story in the Knoxville paper two days later. The conductor on the train that we took out of Knoxville became suspicious when he saw that we had left

the train at the town for which we hadn't bought tickets.

"I thought it peculiar," he said, "that they had bought tickets for Johnstown and got off at———. They didn't look like home folks to me and when I got into my division headquarters that night I decided that they were crooks. There had been so many banks robbed in Tennessee that I thought they might be bank robbers, so I telephoned my suspicions to the chief of police at ——— to look out for them."

The chief organized a posse and was waiting for us.

"Any time ye hear an owl screaming," Danny said, "or see a black cat or hear a dog crying, look out; it's bad luck, b'ys."

I was converted to Danny's creed.

There was still another superstition prevalent in the underworld of the cracksmen in those days and that was that women were dangerous. The reader no doubt has observed the absence of women in my story and has probably wondered why neither I nor my pals had any definite attachments with women. During the time that I was with "Dayton Danny" and "Frisco Eddie" I had many women, but I couldn't cultivate a lasting regard for any of them.

"Women are dangerous," the cracksmen said, "and we won't work with anybody that has a steady girl."

That was an article of their creed that was never violated by any of the boys during the time when I was just breaking into the profession. If a man had a steady broad the gang gave him a wide berth. They figured that he talked with his girl about his business and there was a possibility that she, in turn, would talk to somebody else. The bank burglar, consequently, steered clear of women. And this, incidentally, may explain the success that some of them enjoyed. "Dayton Danny" had been "grifting" for twenty years and had never served a day. "Frisco Eddie" had been on the racket for fifteen years and had never served a day. But they paid the price in other ways, as you will see later on in my story! They paid a terrific price!

Further back in my narrative I referred to the bank burglar's utter disregard of penalties. I pointed out that the advocates of tough prisons and long terms as deterrents didn't know what they were talking about. I said the average crook never considered penalties. I don't believe that criminals can

be scared by imposing long terms and by making the prisons institutions of torture. I will give you an example of how we reacted to the states that said: "Give the burglars hell."

Tennessee was tough. Her prison was tough, but North and South Carolina were tougher. In North Carolina they could hang a burglar who committed burglary in the first degree. Burglary in the first degree was entering a building where people slept. Safe crackers received from ten to twenty years in North Carolina. If they were caught with burglar tools in their possession they were given ten to fifteen years even though they hadn't committed a robbery. In South Carolina they gave safe crackers from thirty years to life if they were caught with explosives and the South Carolina stir was no kindergarten, believe me! They slaughtered convicts down yonder in Old South Carolina! The North Carolina stir was a thousand per cent worse than the Tennessee big house. Big Sam with his leather and the Warden were bad, but the North and South Carolina prisons with their whipping bosses and psalm-singing wardens were hell a mile. I know!

Now if we were considering penalties, we would have given North and South Carolina wide berths and played Tennessee from stem to stern. But we didn't. We went where there was most money and the best get-aways and the best marks. Penalties never entered our minds. We picked the toughest state, South Carolina. We went to Columbia, the capital, and rented an apartment. We worked out of Columbia looking for nice-looking robbable jugs. Now and then we heard of the natives lynching crooks, black and white, but as I recall it none of us ever made a balloon ascension out of the Palmetto State.

We found plenty of nice marks in South Carolina. The first one was a big cotton mill town. I will call it Blacksville. It was a one-man town. The mill owner, a titled Englishman, owned the mill, the bank, most of the houses, the theater, the electric-lighting plant and nearly everything else. He also worked hundreds of children between the ages of ten and fifteen, paying them from three to nine dollars a week for ten and twelve hours work a day! He was a very wealthy Englishman and a very stingy one. The gentleman had a heart, as "Dayton Danny" used to say, "as big as a duck's liver!"

I looked forward with much pleasure to knocking off his jug!

The employees lived in dirty, dilapidated-looking frame shacks. The titled English gentleman lived in a magnificent mansion on the side of a mountain overlooking the town and his gigantic mill. The bank building was worthy of a big city. It was a two-story white Italian marble affair, the top floor of which was the office of the mill and the bottom floor the bank. He had up-to-date works in the jug—a fine Herring, Hall and Marvin vault and a big six-foot automatic time-locking safe with a burglar proof kiester, or money chest. The mill was about two hundred yards to the left of the bank building. It was a six-story building. There was a belfry attached to it. The mill watchman was the bank watchman. He looked after the bank and the mill. He made hourly rounds, visiting all the floors of the mill on his way to the belfry, where he rang out the passing hours; after which he went to the bank, tried the door and then returned to the mill. He got very little rest.

We tabbed him for two nights. He was very regular, very methodical. That bell-ringing stunt kept him going like a clock, so that we could figure on him doing this and that at certain periods.

At ten after one on the night of the attack he tried the bank door. We were in the bank within five minutes after he left the bank door. We opened the door with a skeleton key. It was a big barred door—a gate, in fact. The door which lead into the bank proper was a wooden one with an ordinary lock on it. We opened that with a skeleton screw (key). I locked the barred door with the skeleton key, after we got on the other side of it, by sticking my hand through the bars. We just shut the inside door and put a chair under the knob. The watchman never tried the wooden door. He couldn't reach it from the other side of the barred one.

We made the first shot on the vault when we saw him climbing the stairs of the mill with the lantern in his hand. We made the second, third and fourth before he got to the belfry. We made the fifth while he was ringing the bell for the hour of two. We rested when we saw him coming across the lawn to the bank. We heard him at the barred gate in front of the jug. When he went back to the mill we gave the peter a

few more shots. Before he came back at three o'clock we had the contents of the jug packed into sacks and were on our way rejoicing.

The titled Englishman had "the best bloodhounds in the South." We weren't alarmed about the "bleedhounds," as Danny termed them, for we had our old reliable oil of mustard with us. The dogs probably followed us to the railroad track where we "doped up," tying a piece of oil-soaked rag to each shoe so that they dangled along the ground. No "bleedhound" in the world could trail that scent. The job netted $35,000 in cash and a brooch with thirty-seven diamonds in it, the largest of which was six carat and the smallest a quarter carat. I took my share to Boston and Mom, spent a few weeks with her, and returned to business again. There was but another month left in which we could plunder banks. March was about gone. Spring was on the way with her short and temperate nights when the windows went up and the covers went off the beds and when brave men ventured out to chase the elusive burglar. Nobody ever chased me on a cold night. They might raise their windows and shoot at me or shout "skat" at me, but they never came out into the cold after me! Men are just as temperamental as the ladies, and just as timid when burglars are abroad on cold wintry nights! No kidding!

"Dayton Danny" had a surprise in store for me when I met him in Baltimore after my visit home.

"I'm through with the racket, Jack," he declared, "through for all time."

"What's happened to you now?" I asked him.

"I'm getting married," he grinned from ear to ear.

"Married?" I was astonished. "Who's the unfortunate dame that's going to marry you?"

"Ye should have a look at her. She's as sweet as can be and as nice as can be. She's a darling."

"Kate" was all that Danny said she was. She would never cop any blue ribbons for beauty, and she wouldn't have many fellows looking at her figure or raving about her "lines." She was just a nice, clean-cut, corn-fed, gum-chewing country girl, who would make Danny a good wife. The rascal had been keeping company with her for two years, during which time he had been putting in one bank the money that he was taking

out of another, saving every nickel that he could get his mitts on.

I stood up for him when he married Kate. He bought one of the finest farms in the state of Maryland. He and Kate settled down to a life on the farm. Eddie and I wished him the best of luck and left him to carve out the new career. I didn't think he would stick at the new life long, but Eddie said he was the sort that would stick.

"He's gone for good," Eddie declared. "He's bugs about Kate, and when a guy falls for a broad he's good as dead."

I thought about the old adage: "Once a crook always a crook."

I was wondering whether Danny would hew close to the line of the straight and narrow for the rest of his days.

We filled his place with "Salem Sammy," a Western peter man, and an old-timer of fifty-odd years. We went back to South Carolina, the state with the tough prison and the severe penalties. We bumped into a tragedy in the town of Blackstone. I witnessed my first murder in that town.

We had done all the regular stuff, checking up the night watchman, doping out the get-away and so on. The job looked like a gift. We decided to stick up the night hack before we went to work on the jug. He prowled the streets from midnight to seven in the morning. He acted like a bull that had been elevated (stuck up) before. He walked the pavements until he saw somebody coming toward him and then he stepped out in the middle of the street. Either he had been stuck up before, we thought, or he had read so much about other bulls being stuck up by jug men (bank burglars) that he was inordinately cautious and timid.

"We'll have to resort to a little strategy to get this big bull," I thought.

I concluded to stage a fake drunk act. Sammy was to pretend that he was terribly drunk. We started up the main street dragging him along between Eddie and me. The bull saw us coming. Sammy was mumbling a song like a regular souse. The big bull didn't step out in the middle of the street when he saw us coming. He stopped right in front of the bank.

"Got a drunken friend here, chief," I said.

"So I see," he came up to us. "Where y' all from?"

"From the railroad camp," Eddie told him. There was a railroad gang at work about two miles out of town laying a new track.

Suddenly we dropped Sammy and leveled our guns at the officer.

He put his hands in the air as we commanded. I took his gun away from him. He was as cool as could be and very polite.

"What you boys aim to do?" he asked us.

"Rob the bank, chief," I replied. "Why?"

"Boys," he went on, "would y' let me say a word or two?"

"Sure, shoot," Eddie spoke to him.

"Boys," he began, "this yere bank don't mean nothing to me. I ain't got no money in it. I've never had enough money to put any of it in a bank, for quick as I git it ah got to spend it." A faint smile played around the corners of his mouth and he was looking right at us as he talked. I was impressed with his coolness. I had never seen a cop act so indifferently in a crisis.

"No," he drawled in true Southern style, "I ain't never had enough money to put in the bank and I don't never expect to have. Boys," his voice trembled a little now, "ah been up against it all mah life, had a lot of sickness in mah family. A month ago ah buried my wife. She died with tuberculosis. Ah got a boy sixteen who's about to die with the same disease. The doctor told me to-night before ah left home that mah boy would sure die within sixty days if ah didn't git him out of this yere climate. Now as ah said before this yere bank don't mean nothing to me so far as the money in it is concerned, but this yere job of watching is my bread and butter. If I lose the job ah loses my bread and butter and just now ah can't afford to lose it, for mah boy's life's at stake. If y'all robs this yere bank ah sure loses the job. Ah wants to beg of you as man to man to give me the chance that y'all would want if I was in your places and y'all were in mine. There's lots of other banks in the state, boys, and I sure would appreciate it powerfully much if y'all would give me a chance and go some place else."

I was speechless for the moment. I didn't know what to say to him. This was a most unusual state of affairs, a cop begging us to go away and leave the bank. I looked at Eddie and Sammy. There was a serious expression on their faces. The big bull's story about the dead wife and the sick boy touched me and it had evidently touched them. We moved over to the curb and began to discuss the matter. Sammy suggested that we knock off the jug and give the bull a bit out of the proceeds. Eddie thought that was a good idea and so did I. I put the proposition up to the cop.

"Chief," I said, "we'll rob the bank and give you a share of the loot. How's that strike you?"

"Boys," his voice trembled perceptibly and there was an arrestingly sympathetic appeal to it, "I appreciate y'all's kindness, but ah couldn't do that. Why don't y'all go some place else, because no matter what you do, ah'll lose mah job. Give me a chance, boys, please, for the sake of mah sick son."

"Give him a chance," Sammy cut in; "we can go over to Johnstown and take a slam at that jug over there."

The big cop's appeal got us. I handed him back his gun after he had promised that he wouldn't say anything about our having stuck him up.

"Ah won't say a word about it," he declared; "y'all's been mighty fine with me."

Eddie suggested that we give him "a few dollars." We chipped in and handed over seventy or eighty dollars. He took it and thanked us. He appeared to be very grateful. We stood and talked with him for about five or ten minutes. He repeated his declaration that he wouldn't tell anybody that we had stuck him up.

"Y'all can go right out of town about your business," he said. "Ah won't breathe a word to nobody."

We shook hands with him.

"Hope the kid gets better, chief," Sammy said to him.

We bade him good night and started down the street. Suddenly he jumped behind a tree and began to shoot at us. Eddie groaned and dropped to the ground. A bullet had plowed its way through his brain. He died instantly. The big cop was still behind the tree, blazing away at us. Presently the town was aroused. Windows went flying up. After

a few minutes the natives were out on the street armed to the teeth. We beat a hasty retreat.

What Sammy and I thought and said about the double-crossing cop wouldn't look well in print. He was, at least, a poor sportsman. It seemed to me that he should have played fair with us after we had acted the good fellow with him, regardless of the fact that we were crooks. Possibly I'm wrong. It may be that he was justified in handing us the double cross. Was he? I've thought about that incident many, many times.

"Frisco Eddie" came from a family of crooks. His brother, "Oakland Tommy," was a bank burglar. His father had been a confidence man around Frisco and was known to the underworld of the Coast as "Old Frisco Dude McGee."

Eddie's brother, Tommy, was married and the father of three beautiful children. He lived on the edge of a small town outside of Wilmington, Delaware. The townfolk thought he was a retired business man. He was a member of the town council, a generous contributor to every movement, charitable and otherwise, and a hail-fellow-well-met from every angle. He and the mayor and the chief of police were buddies. Tommy visited their homes and they visited Tommy's. But there was one part of that home into which nobody ever ventured, and that was Tommy's laboratory on the second floor, where he made his nitroglycerine.

"Salem Sammy" and Tommy were close friends. They had operated on the Coast years back. I knew Tommy fairly well, but not as intimately as Sammy. I had visited his home several times, Sammy had been there more frequently than I. Sammy told Tommy about Eddie's death and the double-crossing night hack at Blackstone.

"That bull's quite a con man, isn't he?" He didn't appear to be very upset over his brother's death.

I expected him to fly into a rage.

"He's a cold-blooded egg," I thought.

He displayed absolutely no emotion. He just sat there with his little girl on his knee. He asked us where the town was located, how to get to it, what railroads ran into it and what was the best cross-country get-away from it.

"I may drift down that way next fall with my mob," he

said. "That was a tough break that that bull gave Eddie, but I think you all were a bunch of saps to hand him back a loaded gun. There's only one good cop and he's dead. Never trust a cop."

But he didn't wait, as I subsequently learned, until the following fall to go to Blackstone. He went down there a week after we told him about Eddie's death. He went down to get a line on the cop, where he lived, his name and whether or not his boy was sick and his wife had died as he told us. A year later Tommy and his gang went to Blackstone to rob the bank. They met the cop on the main street. They stuck him up. Then he began to give them precisely the same spiel that he had given us about the dead wife, the sick boy and his poverty-stricken condition. He pleaded with Tommy to "give him a chance." And while he was talking, Tommy was breaking down the cop's gun behind his (Tommy's) back.

"He talked very interestingly," Tommy told me when I met him a year after the affair in Blackstone. "He was an actor to his finger-tips. I offered him a hundred bucks. He took it. He promised me that he wouldn't say anything about our having stuck him up. We shook hands with him, bade him good night and started down the street. I looked around when we started down the street. He had jumped behind a tree. I could hear the 'click, click, click' of the empty gun. He had double-crossed me. I went right back and killed him where he stood. He begged for mercy. 'You killed my brother,' I said, 'and now I'm going to kill you.'

"It's my first killing," he went on, "and if he had killed Eddie while Eddie was working on the jug I wouldn't have given the matter a second thought. It was the manner in which he killed him that got my goat."

But "Oakland Tommy" eventually died as he had lived. His ending was infinitely more melodramatic than Eddie's. One day while he was making nitroglycerine in his laboratory it exploded. His children were playing in the room above the laboratory. They, three of them, were killed. Tommy was blown to pieces. The house was demolished. Not until then did the chief of police and the mayor learn that their buddy was none other than "Oakland Tommy," the bank burglar!

CHAPTER VIII

UP AGAINST NORTH CAROLINA

ONE shot pete jobs" were in order after the Blackstone fiasco. The nights had got short and warm before we located another robbable jug, so we had to pick up a little small change digging into post offices and stores to live through the summer. We were up in Virginia when spring arrived. There was a celebrated detective in Suffolk, Virginia, called "Get 'Em Bill Black." Bill was noted for the many murder mysteries that he had unraveled with his two bloodhounds "Mary Ann" and "Sundown." It was said that Bill's dogs had never failed to run their man to earth. He and the dogs were known from Norfolk to New Orleans and not infrequently police officers as far away as Charleston, South Carolina, sent for Bill and his dogs to help them out on various criminal investigations. It wasn't on record that Bill and his dogs had ever caught a safe cracker and so far as we knew, Sammy and I, the dogs had never been put on the trail of a cracksman. Of course we were aware of the fact that any half-wise peter man knew what to do with a bloodhound.

One beautiful summer's night we were sitting on the porch of the Virginia Beach Hotel at Virginia Beach, gazing out on the ocean. The "one shot pete jobs" (safes that could be blown with one explosion) had got on my nerves. There was no thrill to opening them and the most we ever collected was $800 or $900, just enough to enable us to make the proverbial both ends meet. I was tired of fooling around with gamblers and card men, tired of dancing and drinking, sick of the humdrum life of the summer resort with the four-flushing men and the giddy, artificial women. I wanted something new. I picked up a magazine. I saw an article in it about "Get 'Em Bill Black" and his bloodhounds. The title of the article was: "The Bloodhounds That Never Failed to Tree Their Man."

I read it through. It gave me an idea. I turned to Sammy.

"Want to have some fun to-night," I said to him.

"Sure," he grinned; "what's up?"

"Read this," I handed him the magazine, "and then I'll tell you."

"Well," Sammy said when he had finished, "what's the idea?"

"Let's pack a bag and beat it down to Suffolk and have a little laugh at the expense of 'Get 'Em Bill Black' and his celebrated bleedhounds."

Down to Suffolk we went. We engaged a room in a second-rate boarding house on the edge of the town. Then we went out and located Bill Black's residence, after which we took a slant at one of the stores that had a harmless looking little peter in it.

We returned to the boarding house about eleven o'clock, sat around and gabbed for a few minutes with the landlord, then went up to our room. About one in the morning we climbed out of the window, went down to the store with the little harmless-looking pete in it, jimmied the door, knocked off the peter and then walked leisurely up to Bill Black's residence. We stepped on the porch. We walked around to the rear of the house and around both sides three or four times. We strolled down the street about a hundred yards before we "doped up"—put the oil of mustard on rags and tied them to our shoes.

On the way back to the boarding house we telephoned Bill Black's home. "There's been a robbery down town, Mr. Black,"—I held my hands to my nose to disguise my voice,—"at Harrington's store. They want you to come down with your dogs."

We went back to the boarding house, climbed in the window and retired. The next afternoon when we were on our way to the station to get a train back to Norfolk we saw Bill Black and his two dogs pass in a taxicab. When we arrived at the station, Bill's dogs were just being put in the baggage car. Bill had gone into the smoker. I followed him in. Everybody in the car knew him. I went up to him and introduced myself.

"Mr. Black," I held out my hand, "my name's Jordan,

Tom Jordan, from the Piedmont district of South Carolina."

Bill jumped up and grabbed my hand.

"Ah's glad to know y', Mr. Jordan."

"I've read right smart about you and your dogs," I went on bulling him, "and this is the first time I've ever had the chance to speak to you, so I took advantage of it. I——"

"Well, Mr. Jordan," he interrupted me and began to boast, "I've got right smart dogs and I don't reckon there's any better in this country. Leastwise ah ain't seed none any better than my Mary Ann and Sundown, but dad blame my soul," —he twisted his face in a knot, took off his hat and scratched his head,—"ah had something happen to me last night that ah just can't make heads or tails out on it. I——"

"What was that?"

"Well, sir," he went on, "about two o'clock this mawning ah got a telephone call that burglars had broken into Bob Harrington's sto'. Ah got up and ran down there with Mary Ann and Sundown right away. They picked up the scent right in front of the safe that the burglars had cracked open, and then they ran right smack up the street to mah home. They ran all around mah home, in the back yard and on the porch and then they started back to town. Presently they stopped daid still, wouldn't run another step."

"Couldn't go any further, eh?" I feigned great interest in his story.

"Not another damn step would they go," he continued, "and," he chuckled, "some of them citizens begin to kid me. The chief of police said, 'Bill, I thinks you robbed Bob Harrington's safe.' It's the first time mah dogs ever failed to follow a scent until they had run down their man. Ah don't know what to make out o' it, Mr. Jordan."

"Funny," I exclaimed, "and mysterious, isn't it?"

"Damn if it ain't," he grunted.

We separated at Portsmouth. Bill shook hands with me and extended an invitation to visit him any time I was in Suffolk. I never visited him. To-day Bill knows why his dogs can't trail a safe cracker. Like everything else, that underworld secret leaked out and Bill has been "wised up." But he has never been able to train "a bleedhound" to trail a safe cracker. A few years later I had cause to regret the

smart-aleck trick that I played on Bill Black. Further on in my story I'll tell you all about it.

Summer finally passed on with her short, hot nights. Winter came breezing in with her long and blustery nights. I was happy again. Sammy and I had lined up five or six good marks, two in North Carolina, three in South Carolina and one in Delaware, the state where they apply the lash to the backs of criminals. It might be well for the advocates of punishment as a crime deterrent to note the fact that we went into Delaware to plunder the only plunderable bank that we could find! I repeat that we never gave punishment a second's consideration. We would have dug into the jugs if the penalty had been the electric chair, simply because we believed, as most crooks believe, that we could get away!

We concluded to pick on one of the North Carolina jugs first. I don't mind giving the name of the town in view of the fact that the Tar Heels and I have had some controversy over the job. It was, if my memory serves me correctly, Littleton. It was a soft-looking mark, and we didn't expect to get over eight or ten gran out of it, just enough to start us off right! It was so easy looking that we didn't bother to take a third man in with us. Well, it was easy getting the dough out of the time-lock pete and vault, but we fell down on the get-away. We thought we were going directly across the country from the Seaboard Air Line Railroad to the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, where we intended to board a train for Norfolk. But instead of going right straight across the county, Halifax County, we were walking around in a circle. When day broke we were only six miles away from Littleton. We had crawled into a schoolhouse to make a fire and get a heat on, intending to hike out before school convened. We fell asleep. The teacher and a number of pupils came in while we were asleep. They tiptoed out, so she said later on, and notified the sheriff, who organized a posse and came back to the knowledge box (schoolhouse) and glomed (arrested) us.

They had the goods on us. We decided that it would be a waste of time to stand trial. We knew that those Tar Heels were death on safe crackers and that the judge would probably give us a stiff jolt if we put the county to any un-

necessary expense. I had a hunch that we could make a dicker with the prosecuting attorney if we pleaded guilty. I sent for him. I told him we wanted to plead guilty if he would get the judge to be lenient.

"I am not in a position to promise anything to y'all," he said, "but the judge always considers things when a man pleads guilty. I think the judge will treat y'all fairly if y'all plead guilty and save the county the expense of a trial."

"Very well," I replied, "we'll plead guilty."

Several days after this chat with the prosecutor we were taken into court to plead to the indictment.

The judge, as I recall him, was an unusually fine-looking man with a Vandyke beard and a nice, pleasant face. There was nothing about His Honor to suggest sternness or severity. I liked his face. It was a kind face, the face, so I thought at that time, of a regular eighteen-carat human being.

"He's a swell-looking mug," Sammy said when we sat down in the prisoners cage. "He'll let us off with about a 'five specker.'" "A five specker" is five years.

I agreed with Sammy. I didn't expect over five years, since we had pleaded guilty.

"John Lanahan," the clerk called my name.

I pleaded guilty and sat down.

"Stand up," the clerk shouted, "until His Honor passes sentence."

His Honor looked at me over his spectacles and grinned. I grinned back at him. I felt like saying 'Howdy, Judge.' That face appealed to me and so did the eyes. They were great big blue eyes, blazing with tenderness and sympathy, I thought.

"John," His Honor began to talk, "how old are you?"

"Twenty-one," I told him. I was twenty-five.

"Twenty-one?" he kept peering at me over the spectacles.

"Yes, Judge, twenty-one," I tried to cry but couldn't.

"Ever arrested before?"

"No, Judge, never."

"First offense, John?"

"Yes, Judge." I tried to get a few tears out of my eyes.

"If I can only cry," I thought, "he may let me off."

He looked at a paper. Then he called Sammy's name.

"Frank Murphy, stand up." Sammy got up on his feet.

"You sit down, John," the Judge said.

That John business made me think that he was interested in me, that he liked me, felt sorry for me.

"He's a hell of a fine mug," I said to myself.

He began to question Sammy. He didn't call him Frank.

"How old are you, Murphy?" he said.

"Fifty-three," Sammy replied.

"Ever arrested before?"

"Twice, Your Honor," Sammy said.

"The sentence of the court is that you shall be confined in the State's Prison at Raleigh for the term of nineteen years."

"He's not so tender after all," I thought.

When I heard that sentence I dismissed all thought of His Honor discharging me. He asked Sammy two questions and then gave him nineteen years. My stomach began to tremble. I tried to cry. I couldn't make the tears come through my eyes.

"Stand up, John Lanahan," the clerk shouted.

"It pains me to see a young man like you here," His Honor began. "Yes, indeed," he drummed a pencil on the table and looked out the window. "It's a sad spectacle," he resumed. "Your friend evidently led you into this business. He looks the part of a hardened man of crime and he's a criminal by the words of his own mouth. I can see that he has had a destructive influence on you. Too bad, too bad," he drummed the pencil on the desk again and looked out the window.

"He's going to send me to the reform school sure as hell," I thought.

He stroked the Vandyke beard. For a moment he didn't say anything. He turned around in his swivel chair. He had his back to me. A deathlike silence prevailed in the old court room. One could have heard a pin drop. He wheeled around and looked at me.

"The duties of a judge become disagreeable when young men like you are brought before us. You've evidently come from a good family. You look like a boy that's had advantages. Still," he went on in an apologetic manner, "I must do my duty regardless of how disagreeable it may be. I hope this will be a lesson to you and that when you are released

you will steer clear of evil associations and concern yourself with only what is clean and upright. The sentence of the court is that you shall be confined in the State's Prison at Raleigh for a term of fourteen years."

I lost all control of myself. I hurled a string of burning maledictions at him. The court room was in an uproar. Three or four officers grabbed me and threw me into a chair. I fought them and cursed them as I had cursed the judge.

"John Lanahan, stand up," the clerk shouted.

I paid no attention to him. He called my name again.

"Ah, go to hell!" I screamed. "Don't bother me."

"I will increase your term to fifteen years," His Honor said.

"So far as I'm concerned you can make it a hundred and fifteen, you old four flusher," I snarled.

The officers grabbed me and dragged me out of the court room.

"No, no, bring him back," the judge shouted.

They led me back into the bull pen again.

"I can't very well give you a hundred and fifteen," he began, "but I would like to if the statute permitted it, because I can see that you're a hopelessly incorrigible character. I will impose the maximum penalty. Nineteen years in State's Prison."

"Nineteen years," I mused.

I began to figure how old I would be when I got out.

"Forty-four," I said to myself, "an old man. Some jolt, some jolt."

But it didn't worry me. I had passed the stage of the game where I could worry about anything. I was a real hard-boiled underworld mongrel now. Nineteen years didn't mean any more to me than nineteen days. First of all I made up my mind that I wasn't going to serve nineteen years. That was too damn long for an adventurous soul like me to stay in one place. I couldn't possibly entertain such a thought as remaining in a prison for nineteen years.

"Not by a damn sight," I declared; "I'll die first."

So I went to the State's Prison at Raleigh determined to get away or die.

I'll never forget the day that I arrived in that madhouse!

The first man I met when I stepped into the prison was the

Warden, Captain John Flenting. The Captain was sixty-five but he was as active as a man in his early thirties and as straight as an arrow. He wore a long flowing white beard. He had a long hooked nose that curved in at the end like an eagle's beak, little penetrating eyes and a little bald head. The head was unusually small for a man of his size. He weighed around two hundred pounds. There was something about him, and I guess it was the little head on the big muscular neck and the long hooked nose, that suggested the abnormal to me.

He didn't speak to Sammy or me while we were in his office and we didn't speak to him. It was not until he got us into the reception hall, where new convicts were bathed, shaved and dressed in stripes, that he opened his mouth, in which he had a big cud of tobacco.

"Yer Yankees, ain't y'?" he said.

We admitted that we came from the North.

He proceeded to tell us what he expected us to do while we were in his charge. He talked about the strap and the "Mulligan balls."

"If y'all ever decide to leave this place,"—he was grinning,—"be sure that y'all run close to the ground, for we have a gun here that we call the Mulligan and it shoots a ball that tears the hide off whoever it hits. I have guards here who love to shoot and who never miss. I have one of the best whipping bosses in this prison that ever lived. He swings a mean strap and while we don't like to beat convicts, yet at the same time we've got to do it once in a while to let them know that they's in prison."

Then he took our pedigrees—age, place of birth, time of birth, residence, names of parents, criminal records (which we said we didn't have), occupation and so on.

When it came to occupation I told him that I was a baker. I told him that I was a baker because one of the convicts in the bathhouse told me that the baker, a lifer, had been commuted to twenty years and was going out in about three months.

"Tell him that yer a baker and he'll put y' down on his waiting list fer that job," the convict informed me.

Captain John looked at me when I told him that I was a baker.

"How much experience?" he asked.

"Seven years," I replied.

"Well," he went on, "my baker's going out soon and I'll put y' in the baker shop later on."

But the lifer didn't go out until the latter part of July. Captain John was a man of his word. He called me into his office and questioned me further regarding my abilities as a baker, after which he gave me the job.

Sammy was a machinist, so he put him in the machine shop.

Now I didn't know a thing about baking. I had never seen a biscuit made. I had never seen bread of any sort made, but it seemed to me that I could get by with the job of baking in the stir.

"They can't be so fussy," I thought; "anything will do."

The menu was corn bread twice a day, dinner and supper, biscuits for breakfast. Each man was given three biscuits. Baking corn bread was a cinch. All I had to do was mix it with water, toss it in a pan and shove it in the oven. I made fine "cone brade" (as the yaps pronounced corn bread), but making biscuits was an altogether different job.

There were three hundred and fifty convicts. That meant ten hundred and fifty "sinkers." I had absolutely no idea how much flour would be required to make that many biscuits. That was positively Greek to me. But I'm an adventurous sort, so I plunged into the job with the optimism of a gambler.

"If I can shoot open a vault," I mused, "I surely ought to be able to make and bake these 'dough balls.' "

I emptied three sacks of flour into the trough. I was sure that was sufficient to make the ten hundred and fifty biscuits. I tossed a half dozen cans of baking powder over the flour. Then I poured a bucket of water in the mixing trough and proceeded to make a dough. In the midst of this operation I happened to look over under a table and saw a bucket of lard.

"Holy smokes," I said to myself, "I forgot the lard."

I was stuck. I didn't know what to do. I tossed a few handfuls of lard into the trough. This made the dough greasy and slippery. I had to put in more flour before I could get a mixture that I could knead. I worked until the perspiration began to stream down my back and face. I eventually got a fine dough. I picked it up and threw it over on the table and

began to cut out the biscuits with a big biscuit cutter. The dough looked fine, but I was worried about the absence of lard. I knew that I should have put lard into the baking powder and flour.

"I guess it'll be all right," I mused.

I had worked up enough dough to make three or four thousand biscuits. I threw what was left into the furnace. I counted ten hundred and fifty biscuits. I opened the oven door and slid them into the oven. There were ten or eleven pans, each pan held about a hundred "sinkers." I closed the door and sat down. Now I had no idea of how long it took to cook a biscuit. I was afraid that they might burn up on me, so I looked at them every three or four minutes. They were rising beautifully. When I first looked at them they were about an inch below the top of the pan. The second time I looked at them they were even with the top of the pan. The third time I took a slant at them they were above the top of the pan. They were rising like the sun, coming up and up and up as the minutes flitted by. Finally they got so high that I was possessed with the fear that I might not be able to get them out of the oven.

"I better take 'em out," I thought, "before they rise to the top of the oven."

I began to pull them out. They just missed the top of the oven door by a hair. They must have been at least six inches high and they were very yellow looking.

"I used too much baking powder," I said to myself.

They got very hard when they cooled off. They were mighty poor-looking "sinkers" and they tasted not unlike green persimmons. I had a hunch that there was going to be something said about those biscuits. And I had a feeling that my days as a baker were numbered. Well, breakfast rolled around. The waiters came down into the bakery and got the biscuits and carried them into the dining room. I got up near the door where I could look into the dining room without being observed by any of the officers or any of the convicts.

Presently I heard a few of the boys grumble. One by one they took it up until the crescendo developed into a wild barbaric din. They stamped their feet. They beat the tables with their tin pans, whistled, cursed.

"We want good biscuits," they screamed. "Where in the hell did these biscuits come from? Who baked these biscuits? They're rotten, rotten. Give us some good biscuits."

Pandemonium reigned supreme. Captain John came dashing into the bakery with his hat in his hand. He was out of breath.

"Hear that noise, hear that noise?" he gasped.

"What's up, Captain?" I said.

"Who told you that you could bake biscuits," he shouted frantically, and waved his hat in the air. "Listen to that noise in the dining room. Those biscuits ain't fit for a dog to eat. I——"

"Just a minute," I interrupted him; "what's wrong with those biscuits?"

"Get that cap and apron off and get down to the brickyard." He began to pull the white apron and cap off me. "You'll be able to make better bricks than biscuits. My, oh, my—" he walked up and down the bakery, scratching his "hade,"—"my oh, my, what liars you Yankees are!"

The cons on the brickyard greeted me with a volley of catcalls, hoots, jeers and maledictions of a sort that can't be quoted. The boss of the brickyard was an old Southerner named Hiram Smith. He articulated through his nose.

"Y' nearly caused a riot in that dining room this mo'ning," he roared. "Now let's see if y' can cause a riot with one o' them 'Georgia buggies' (wheelbarrows). Git one o' them 'Georgia buggies' in yer hands and step about."

He yelled for a big lifer, Jerry Atwell.

"Jerry," he said to the coon, "take this yere Yankee baker in yer line and step about."

When Hiram said "step about" he meant set a fast pace.

There were twenty-five of us in the line. The brickyard was built on a hill and we had to roll the "Georgia buggies" filled with bricks up to the brick-burning kilns on top of the hill. Jerry certainly stepped about. He got an extra plug of tobacco for doing what the boss told him to do. He was the only nigger in the line; all the rest of us were white men. I couldn't possibly keep up with him. I hadn't done any hard work in so long that it was physically impossible for me to follow that big nigger. A tropical sun was beating down on

us. The perspiration was rolling off me, streaming into my eyes until I couldn't see. When I stopped to wipe my face, I fell behind the line. Hiram hurled all sorts of curses and threats at me.

"Keep up with that line, Yankee," he said, "or I'll have to take y' in and git the Warden to give y' a little leather."

I tried to keep up. The sweat was running into my shoes. The brick dust was caked on my face. The striped regalia was sticking to my body. All day long Hiram kept after me, threatening me with the leather. I didn't want any of the leather; so I worked like a slave.

They gave me cold soup and corn bread for supper that night. I could have eaten raw horse meat, I was so hungry. The cell to which I had been assigned was literally alive with bedbugs. I flopped on the bed. I was too tired to take off either the sweat-soaked clothes or my shoes. The bedbugs went to work on me right away. A gang of tarantulas couldn't have kept me awake that night. I was exhausted and dropped off to a dead sleep. When I woke up the next morning I was stiff and sore. I could hardly get out of bed. I was aching from head to feet and I was ravenously hungry. The bootleg Java, minus sugar or milk, and only half warm tasted good. The cold biscuits, not much better than those that I had baked, were good and the cold "sowbelly" was not so bad. Promptly at seven o'clock I had a Georgia buggy in my hands following Big Jerry Atwell, the lifer, who sang as he stepped about. As before I fell behind now and then. Hiram, the brickyard boss, bawled me out. I kept on falling behind until he called me out of the line.

"Come on," he snarled, "let's walk about to the Warden's office." I knew that I was on my way for a mess of leather.

Captain John greeted the brickyard boss with a smile when we entered his office.

"What's the Yankee been doing, Mr. Smith?"

"He ain't got much pep, Cap'n," he replied; "been falling behind all morning. Thought a little leather might make him perk up a bit."

"Captain," I cut in, "I'm not used to that work. I'm so sore I can hardly move, but I think I'll be able to hit the ball after I get toughened."

"Yer not sore, yer just lazy," he grunted. "I know you-all No'theners. Y'all's a lazy lot of folks. Ah never seed one that wan't lazy. Ah'll give y' a little leather; maybe that'll brace y' up. Y' been sent here to work and y' got to work, by God."

They took me down into the cell block and proceeded to leather me. They took my trousers off, put a black cap over my "hade" and then with the aid of a block and tackle they pulled me in the air until my toes just touched the ground. Joe Halliday was the whipping boss. In the vernacular of the Southern prison keepers, "he swung a mean strap." He hit me twenty licks. The blood was running down my legs.

"Now see if y' can't keep that Georgia buggy going," Captain John laughed at me.

"Guess he'll go better now, Cap'n," the brickyard boss said.

"You think I will, do you, you ——— ——— ———" I hauled off and banged him right in the nose, after which I slugged Captain John.

Of course this was an idiotic move on my part and if I had had an ounce of common sense I wouldn't have done it. I would have taken my medicine and said nothing. I didn't do it to be tough. I just lost all control of myself. Captain John, however, had an idea that I was trying to be tough, so he started in to convince me that I wasn't.

"String him up agin, Mr. Halliday," he said to the whipping boss.

Then I began to fight. I hit Halliday and knocked him out, whereupon Captain John hit me with his "billy" and knocked me out. The prison doctor took four stitches in my head and I lay in the hospital for three weeks listening to the cons telling me what the good old Captain would do to me when I recovered.

"He hit you twenty licks last time," they said, "but when you git out of this yere hospital he'll hit y' a hundred and twenty."

I began thinking of escape. I thought I saw an opportunity for a fine get-away from the hospital, which was situated on the sixth floor of a building at the end of the "cell house." I wanted to get away from Captain John and his "leather." But I needed tools and about a hundred feet of rope for the escape that I had in mind.

CHAPTER IX

ESCAPE WITH A BLOODHOUND PAL

MY plans for an escape from the hospital looked good. Escape seemed inevitable. The fact that no convict had ever got away from the "big stir" didn't concern me very much. Many had tried and all of them had failed. Over a period of ten years twenty-five cons had tried to beat the joint and every one had been captured before they got over the walls.

"There's got to be a beginning," I mused, "so I'll be the first man to beat the Tar Heel madhouse."

I'll give you a picture of the hospital layout so that you'll thoroughly understand what I had to contend with and what I had to do before I reached what the Southerners called "Governor Green" (liberty).

The hospital was located on the sixth floor of a building at the east end of the cell house. The first floor of this building was a part of the shirt factory and so were the second, third and fourth floors. The fifth floor was the hospital steward's quarters. The white ward was at the north end of the sixth floor while the colored ward was at the south end near the stairs. The main part of the white ward was in a big room about fifty feet wide by one hundred feet long. The bathroom and toilet was off to the right. There were two entrances to the bathroom, a door from the rear which the guard couldn't see from the corridor which he patrolled and one from the front which he could see. There were two windows in the bathroom and I intended to cut the bars in one of the windows and then with the aid of a rope ladder slide to the ground some sixty or seventy-five feet below. If I could cut these bars without being detected by an officer or a prison stool pigeon, it was a hundred to one that I would get away. But I had to get saws and rope. Sammy came to the rescue. He

got me the saws in the machine shop while I stole the rope from the Insane Department storehouse. I stole it piece by piece and "stashed" (hid) it in the basement of the shirt factory.

There was a fellow in the hospital, a Southern murderer, Charley Melvin, who was doing life. One day I felt him out about a get-away.

"Are you going to die in this joint, Charley?" I asked him.

"Guess I will," he responded, "if I don't git nary chance to run away."

"If you got the chance would you run?"

"Would I run?" he laughed. "Would a rabbit run? John [all the yaps called me 'Yankee John'], if ah ever gits a chance, it'll take two men to see me, one to say 'yere he comes' and another to say 'dere he goes.'"

Charley convinced me that he wanted to leave the place and in view of the fact that he was a lifer I thought he would be on the level. It seemed to me that any man doing life would want to get away. I confided in him, told him all about my plans. He was elated. The thoughts of liberty after ten years in prison gave him an awful kick. He consented to help me. I watched the guard while he sawed the bars in the bathroom and he watched while I worked. Every day we did a little sawing, plugging up the cut with soap and lamp black so that the officers couldn't detect it if they should happen to look at the bars. It took us five weeks to cut through a half inch bar. Finally we finished the job. I told Sammy that I was leaving. I framed a get-away for him before I left. I promised to come back the following winter and stick up one of the guards on the wall near the machine shop. We shook hands that night when I went to the hospital. I had carried the rope to the hospital and hid it under the bathtub in the bathroom. Everything was set for the break. We intended to go at midnight, when the guard was at the other end of the corridor eating his supper. I was on edge—nervous, restless, apprehensive. I was so near liberty and yet a little slip might spell defeat. If the guard saw us get out of bed, the jig was up. There was a rule in the hospital that a prisoner should always tell the guard when he wanted to go to the bathroom. Every man had to shout: "Getting up."

He wasn't supposed to get up until the guard had responded with: "All right. Go ahead."

Now if Charley, the lifer, and I both shouted "Getting up," the guard might become suspicious and investigate, so I decided to let Charley utter the phrase. I intended to sneak out of my bed to the bathroom.

Promptly at midnight the guard went down to the other end of the corridor to heat his coffee on the stove. When we heard the dishes rattling Charley got out of bed.

"Gettin' up," he shouted.

"All right. Go ahead," came the guard's reply from the end of the corridor.

I rose and tiptoed over to the bathroom. We pulled the cut bar back and tied the rope to the other bars. I tossed the rope out of the window.

"Go on, Charley." I thought I would let the lifer go first.

"You go." He stepped back.

I thought he was timid, so I climbed up on the window sill and wiggled through the opening.

"Hurry," I spoke to him as I grabbed the rope and began the descent to the ground.

I went down the rope hell bent for liberty. I went so fast that I nearly burnt all the flesh off my hands and when I hit the ground I was greeted with:

"Hands up."

Captain John and two guards leveled their Mulligans at me. "Well," Captain John was grinning from ear to ear, "where y'all goin'? Whatcha doing out at this hour of the morning?"

I saw at once that the lifer had double-crossed me. I was furious.

"What a sucker I was to trust that yap!" I thought.

"Come on, Mister Yankee." Captain John and the guards led me back to a dungeon in the old cell house. "See you in the morning," and he slammed the dungeon door.

At ten the following morning Captain John, the whipping boss and a gang of officers came down to the dungeon to give me a slugging. They probably thought that I would put up a battle as I had done when they beat me before. But I had no intention of fighting. I recalled "Old Rochester Red's" advice:

"No smart fellow ever fights prison keepers."

They stripped me, tied the black cap over my face, drew me up in the air until my toes just touched the ground and then Joe Halliday began to lash me.

"Lay it on good and hard, Mr. Halliday," Captain John said. "Ah want to cure this Yankee of trying to leave this good place. I'll cure him or kill him, so lay the leather on him good and hard, Mr. Halliday."

"Mr. Halliday" banged away at my bare hide until the blood began to trickle down my back and legs. The pain became unbearable and once or twice I moaned:

"Oh, Jesus! God Almighty!"

"Ha," Captain John laughed, "the Lord can't do y' no good; best call on me or Mr. Halliday. We're the only people that can do y' any good. But y' should have thought of the Lord before y' tried to leave the hospital. Lay it on him, Mr. Halliday, he's a gettin' religion."

They beat me until I fainted. I woke up in the dungeon. I couldn't sit down. I had to rest on my stomach. Around nine that night they gave me a cup of water and a small piece of "cone brade." The next morning they took me out again and beat me until I fainted. They tossed me into the dungeon. Every day for five days they beat me until I groaned with pain and begged for mercy. Captain John laughed at me when I begged for mercy. When they finished, my back and hips were a mass of festered sores. I couldn't work. I lay on my stomach for three weeks and then Captain John riveted a shackle on my ankles and shipped me off to the Prison farm at Tillery, North Carolina.

Did these barbarisms to which Captain John subjected me "break me," make me crawl, make me realize that I was on the wrong trail? No, I didn't react to the beatings in that manner. It didn't create any remorse in my heart. It embittered me, made me harder and more unresponsive than ever. It made me more determined than ever to escape. It made me hate more than ever. It filled me with an immeasurable determination to make the State of North Carolina pay for what I had endured when I regained my liberty.

"When I get out," I swore, "I'll give the Tar Heel banks

hell up one side and down the other. I'll make these yaps sweat blood when I get out!"

But if Captain John was bad, Henry Summerfield, the "Supervisor" of the Tillery farm, was a hundred per cent worse. Here was a man with a heart of stone! He got up in the morning with a curse on his big thick lips. He cursed and swore at the prisoners from daylight till dark. He loved to beat prisoners. The first thing he did with a new arrival was beat him. He beat me just as soon as the blacksmith had taken the shackle off my ankles. He called this "putting the fear of God in the hearts of the convicts."

He, too, was a massive man, standing six feet six inches and weighing over two hundred and fifty. He had a long black mustache which he was forever twirling between his thumb and forefinger, big staring, pop eyes, a little pug nose, and stubby nicotine-stained teeth. In every detail he was a modern Simon Legree, even to his dress with the big broad-brimmed sombrero, the trousers stuffed in the knee-length boots and the swaggering, bulldozing manner. He had the "leather" in his hand from the time he got out of bed in the morning until he retired at night. The "leather" was riveted on a stuffed leather handle about two feet long and four inches in diameter. The strap was approximately three feet six inches long, three inches wide and a half inch thick. It had ten or twelve rivets in the end of it. The rivets were there for a purpose. Henry didn't think the bare strap inflicted sufficient pain; therefore he had the rivets inserted to increase the punishment and break the hide.

What I'm going to say about Henry can be verified and I intend to tell the truth. I've seen Henry kill men with the butt end of the strap because they didn't pick enough cotton to suit him. Like Captain John he put a big nigger at the head of the cotton-picking line. Every white man had to keep up with that nigger, had to pick pound for pound as much as the nigger picked. I've seen Henry work men digging ditches in the frost and cold. One morning I saw him knock a poor old nigger stiff with the butt end of the strap, the handle. I saw him work convicts, black and white, until they were so badly frostbitten that they had to have fingers, toes, hands and feet amputated. He worked me and hundreds of other un-

fortunates in ditches where the cold water was up to our knees. If we protested, he licked us.

He had an original method of licking prisoners.

I recall one bitter December morning when the thermometer was dangling around twenty above zero—very cold weather for North Carolina—when I complained of rheumatic pains and asked him to let me off for the day. I was working in a ditch. The water was nearly up to my hips.

"Captain," I pleaded, "I'm sick. Can I get off for a day?"

"Sick?" he grunted. "What the hell's the matter with y'? You God damned convicts are always complaining."

I had got out of the water and was standing on the bank with hat in my hand. Whenever a convict addressed him he had to take off his hat. If he didn't, Henry gave him the leather.

"Yer sick, eh?" He drew the leather out of a holster under his coat. "Well, I know what y' need." He looked around and then suddenly he roared, "Hey, niggers, throw this white son of a bitch; throw him, niggers, throw him."

Two nigger "pets" dashed at me. One grabbed me by the neck and the other grabbed my feet. They threw me to the ground. One pulled my trousers down to my ankles, then one of them sat on my head while the other sat on my feet. "Captain Henry" drew the leather through the dirt and went to work on my bare hide. After each lick he shouted:

"Ha! Sick, eh; sick, eh? Well, ah'll knock all the God damn sickness out o' y', you damn lazy rascal."

But Captain Henry was a diplomat. He didn't render a man unfit for work. He never beat a man so that he couldn't work. He might kill a man, but he would never beat him up so badly that the man couldn't work. A month or two with Captain Henry filled me with a deep-rooted ambition to kill him. I really made up my mind that I was going to kill him and the two niggers that did the throwing. I saw absolutely no opportunity to escape. I was watched night and day. Captain John had sent my record to Captain Henry and *nobody* had ever got away from Captain Henry's farm. Many convicts had attempted to escape but "Big Ben," the lone bloodhound of the farm, had never failed to run them to earth. God only knows how many times I longed for a few drops of oil of mustard. If I had had a few drops of oil

of mustard I would have been able to get away from the Tillery farm.

I had reached the last ditch. I was desperate. It seemed to me that there was only one way out and that was death.

It was the first and only time in my life that I wanted to slay. I expected Captain Henry to kill me if I didn't succeed in killing him. Death was preferable to nineteen years under Captain Henry.

I stole a knife out of the kitchen and sharpened it to a dagger point.

"If this doesn't rip out that big coward's guts and the guts of his two nigger pets, I'm on my way to glory." I felt the pointed end of the knife.

Then I began to think of consequences.

"They'll hang me sure as hell," I thought, "if I kill him."

I decided that it would be wiser to die trying to make an escape, instead of dying on the gallows for Captain Henry and his two nigger pets. Yes, that was the better way. I forgot about the killing party. One morning I made a dash for liberty. I got off the farm and into the woods a mile away. Three guards were blazing at me with their Winchesters. The bullets were whizzing by my head and tearing the ground up all around my feet, but I kept on, falling to the ground now and then, zigzagging in my course until I landed in the woods. Presently I heard the old familiar bloodhound yell. They had "sicked" Big Ben on my trail. I knew the end was near, but I kept on running. Finally Big Ben "treed me." The guards and Captain Henry came along and dragged me back to the farm.

"Throw him, niggers, throw him," Captain Henry yelled, when they got me back to the stockade.

The niggers came at me. I drew the knife and slashed them. Then I made a lunge at Henry. That's all I recall. He beat me over the head with the butt end of the whip. I woke up in the hospital. I had cut the niggers so badly that they, too, had to go to the hospital, but I hadn't done any more than slash the Captain's coat a little in three or four places. He swore that he would beat me to death when I was discharged from the hospital and I swore back at him that I would get him sooner or later if he ever licked me again.

While I was convalescing I had the privilege of walking around the yard on the inside of the stockade. Big Ben was tied to a post in the corner of the yard. A great idea came to me.

"If I can only make a friend out of that mutt," I thought, "I'll be able to beat this joint."

The Captain didn't give Big Ben very much to eat and he kept him chained all the time because he said it made the dog afraid and obedient. He applied the same psychology in his relationship with the dog that he applied in his relationship with convicts. Whenever he passed Big Ben he cursed him and I observed one day that Ben growled at him, exhibiting his big teeth. I saw that Ben didn't have very much love for Captain Henry.

I went up to Ben one afternoon and spoke to him. He plunged at me, straining the leash. He snarled and snapped viciously.

"Hello, Ben, old boy," I said.

I went into the kitchen and stole a bone and brought it out to him. I spoke to him again and again he snarled and snapped at me. He wouldn't be friendly.

But I didn't get discouraged. I had a hunch that I would make a friend out of Big Ben if I was patient. Day in and day out for a week I brought him fine bones covered with meat. I talked to him. He ceased snarling and snapping at me. I thought this was a good sign, that I was making progress. One afternoon I started over to pat him on the head. The kitchen steward saw me.

"Hey, there," he shouted menacingly, "come away from that damn dog. He'll take a leg off y'."

I backed away from Ben and while he growled a little, he didn't show his teeth. I continued to bring him bones. I talked to him every time I brought him a bone.

"If he would only wag that tail," I said to myself, "I could get to him. I wish he would wag the tail."

Very frequently Captain Henry would pass through the stockade and the spot where Big Ben was tied up. Captain Henry never failed to hurl a few curses at the dog and the "bleedhound" never failed to give evidence of his dislike for the burly man-breaker.

I had about reached the stage where I believed that Big Ben didn't understand the language of sympathy and affection. I thought he had become so accustomed to hearing the cold-blooded lingo of the man-breaker and his yellow-hearted assistants that he wouldn't respond to my friendly appeals.

Nevertheless, I went to him day after day with bones and gestures of affection.

"He's a good big puppy," I talked to him. "A nice dog, Big Ben is. He's m' pardner, ain't y', Ben, Old Ben?"

Lo and behold, he wagged his tail one afternoon after I had talked with him and given him three or four lamb chops that I had stolen out of the guard's ice box. I approached him slowly. His tail was wagging, but still I was afraid that he might decide to take a bite out of me. I talked to him as I went toward him. The tail wagged furiously. I went up to him and patted him on the head. He wiggled and grunted. I knew I had him at last. He and I were good friends. He jumped up on my chest, sniffed, licked my face with his tongue, pawed me and gave every dog evidence of his regard for me.

And there was the devil raised about those lamb chops. Captain Henry thought the nigger cook had cooked and eaten them. Therefore, he had the poor cook thrown and gave him ten licks with the leather.

I kept up my visits to Big Ben, stealing everything that I could get my hands on out of the officers' ice box. The dog finally got so that he would wag his tail when he saw me coming. Now I was ready for a break. I was reasonably sure that Big Ben wouldn't attack me when they put him on my trail. I didn't think he would forget me when the man hunt began. If he did I was lost. If he didn't, if he still remembered that I was the fellow that had brought him lamb chops, steaks and chicken, why all was well and my escape was a foregone conclusion. There was a strip of dense woods back of the stockade, but a guard walked the top of the stockade on the side where the woods were located. There was a "dead line" which no convict was ever supposed to cross. This dead line was three feet from the stockade, the eleven-foot fence which surrounded the yard.

"If y'all ever cross that dade line," Captain Henry frequently told us, "y'all's good as dade."

I stole a crowbar out of the commissariat and tossed it over into the weeds on the other side of the dead line, right up against the fence.

"Now," I thought, "if I can only get across the dead line without that 'screw' on the stockade seeing me, I can rip off one of the boards and dash to the woods."

The guard on the stockade, Pat White, had ten or fifteen notches on his Winchester. He had killed that many convicts during the twenty-odd years that he had been in the employ of the State. He was never known to miss. And this moron, who received thirty dollars a month, loved to talk about the convicts he had killed. Captain Henry pointed to him with pride as "a man who had rendered gallant service to the State of No'th C'lina," when other morons were applying for jobs as guards at the farm.

"Ah wants men like Pat White," Henry would tell the ambitious seekers after jobs of guarding and killing convicts, "men that can shoot the hade off'n any of these damn rascals when they try to escape."

I knew if Pat saw me cross the dead line that he would sneak up on me and kill me. He had done that before. He never shouted to the man to get back. He just shot and laughed!

I watched him day in and day out for three weeks. One day I caught him unawares. He turned his back to go into his box. I jumped over the dead line into the high weeds along the fence. I quickly inserted the bar between the boards. I worked slowly and cautiously. My heart was beating like a trip hammer. Suddenly I heard him walking the runway on top of the fence. He couldn't see me unless he bent over the runway, which extended out and over the fence about nine inches. I lay still. I thought he would surely hear my heart beating or my heavy, labored breathing. He moved back toward his box. I pried the board loose and crawled through. I moved along the brush on my stomach and when I was within about twenty-five yards of the strip of woods I got up and ran. He saw me:

"Bang, bang, bang." He shot and yelled, but I was under

cover, running through the woods like a deer. Not long after I heard Big Ben's yelps and howls. He was on my trail. I ran for all I was worth. Ben was getting nearer and nearer to me. I kept on, though I was almost breathless. The thing that gave me hope was the knowledge that they couldn't follow Ben on horseback because the woods were so dense. I was tormented with the thought of what Big Ben would do when he came up to me and I was praying that he would recognize me as the friend who had fed and loved him and stole for him.

I was getting weaker by the minute and Big Ben's long-drawn-out yelps were getting nearer by the minute, until at last he was within three or four hundred yards of me. I stopped and looked back. I saw him coming through the underbrush like a streak of lightning with his nose to the ground. He saw me and headed for me. He was still yelping.

"Big Ben," I spoke and clapped my hands, "come on, pardner. M' old pardner, Big Ben."

He stopped yelping. He came up to me wagging his tail. I threw my arms around his neck and then I started to run like hell with the dog by my side. He never "batted an eye," never even growled or yelped once. He was wagging his tail, shaking himself, and now and then he would jump up on my legs and look at me and lick me with his big red tongue. He acted as though he understood and I'm sure that he did. I have never loved anything in this man's world, human or otherwise, as much as I loved Big Ben that day on my get-away from the man-breaker, Captain Henry, and the "No'th C'lina" farm!

The dog was with me when night came. About midnight we landed in a small village near Weldon, North Carolina, a junction point where the Atlantic Coast Line and the Seaboard Air Line Railroads meet. I was still in the stripes. I had to get clothes. Further, I had to get food. I had not eaten since early morning. And neither had Big Ben. I crashed into a store and stole a swag of crackers and cheese, some canned goods, a suit of overalls, a bull's wool and oakum shirt, hat, shoes and coat. Across the street was a butcher's shop. I went over and kicked that in. Big Ben refused to eat crackers and cheese. He wanted meat and I was determined to get him what he wanted. That mutt was my

friend and I couldn't see him go hungry. I lifted a big side of beef off a hook in the refrigerator and cut off a few choice hunks for my pardner, who devoured them ravenously. I cut off some more and wrapped them up for future use.

We walked into Weldon. I intended to catch a train there and go into Norfolk to see my friend Jerry Sullivan, from whom I would be able to obtain a bank roll until I got on my feet. Incidentally, Jerry had been forwarding me letters from home during the thirteen months that I was in the Tar Heel State, so that neither my mother nor any of the family knew that I had been in the stir. They wrote to Jerry and I wrote to him. He sent the letters to Boston.

In Weldon I was confronted with the problem of what I should do with Big Ben. I decided to put him in an empty box car and leave him there. I lifted him up and placed him in an empty John O'Brien. I threw the meat in the car. He sat down on the floor of the car and began to lick my face. I shut the door. He began to cry. I opened the door and spoke to him. He put both paws on my shoulders and looked at me with an expression which seemed to say: "Don't quit me, pal; I stuck when you needed a friend and why ditch me at this stage of the game?"

So I couldn't leave Big Ben in that John O'Brien along the sidetrack when he looked me in the eyes with that "don't leave me" dog expression on his face.

A rattler pulled into the yards while I stood there at the car door. I grabbed Ben and tossed him into one of the cars and jumped in after him. We rambled into Norfolk and Jerry Sullivan's place.

"Jasus!" Jerry grunted. "Where in the hell did ye git that dog?"

I told Jerry the story of our relationship. Jerry wasn't a dog man, so he couldn't understand my affection for Big Ben. He tried to convince me that I was bugs, and that I should take Ben down and toss him into the Chesapeake Bay. I borrowed two gran (two thousand dollars) from Jerry, dressed up and took Big Ben home to Boston with me. And when, two weeks later, he was struck by an automobile and killed, I give you my word that I never experienced such regret and such a sense of loss in all my life! I loved that mutt!

CHAPTER X

DANNY PAYS AT LAST

I DIDN'T forget Captain Henry of the Tillery Farm or Captain John Flenting when I regained my liberty. I didn't forget the indescribable tortures to which they had subjected me and neither did I forget my vows to make the State of "No'th C'lina" pay me for what "Captain Henry" and "Captain John" did to me while I was in their charge. No—I was still determined to settle that score.

But I had to have help, had to organize another gang. I did that after my visit to Boston. I picked up two good fellows, "St. Louis Dutch" and "Toronto Billy." The latter was much older than I and the first college-bred man that I had met in the underworld. I think my mental evolution began with my relationship with Billy. At least I can say that Billy talked about things which aroused my curiosity—books, paintings, music. I heard my first opera, "Rigoletto," with Billy at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. I didn't understand what it was all about at that time. In point of fact, I couldn't appreciate what Billy saw in an opera; it was all over my head.

Billy woke me up to the fact that there were other things in life besides robbing banks, gambling, playing the races, fine clothes, diamonds, wine and women. Whenever he got a bank roll he went right to New York City and played the swell. He had his evening clothes, dinner jacket and the sort of friends, men and women, with whom I couldn't associate because I didn't, as he put it, "savvy." I didn't know how to talk and carry myself when I got among people outside the borders of Subterranea.

"Jack," he used to say to me, "why don't you get interested in books? You know you're a nice-looking fellow. You look like a gentleman and you act like one until you open your mouth."

"What's wrong with my mouth?" I would reply, "I don't get you?"

"You don't know how to talk," he told me; "your English is fierce. Why don't you study grammar, read good books, go to the opera and associate with people who are not on the racket?"

Billy really taught me how to talk. Whenever, and I guess that was every time I opened my mouth, I pulled grammatical bulls, he corrected me, pointing out the error and telling me what I should say. I tolerated the corrections and listened to his advice about books, music, the opera and the sort of people I should cultivate; but I couldn't see his angle at all. Underworld danglers were good enough for me.

But Billy certainly gave me one good steer. It was after we had robbed a bank in Maryland, getting away with close on to $100,000, that he said to me:

"Have you ever thought about squaring that North Carolina jolt?"

"No," I said, "I haven't."

I thought this was another one of his hoity-toity ideas.

"I think I can introduce you to a fellow who will fix it up," he declared, "for about ten gran."

"You mean," I asked him, "that you can get me a pardon for the balance of that nineteen year bit for ten gran?"

He was sure he could do that little thing and while I doubted it, nevertheless, I handed him ten gran and told him to get busy.

"But," I went on, "I have a score to settle with those yaps down there before I do any business with them."

I took back the ten gran. I had another idea.

"I'll steal the ten gran out of a Tar Heel jug," I thought. "I'll use their money for the pardon."

I gave Mom ten gran when I went home after the Maryland job and then I beat it back to "No'th C'lina" to make the citizens pay for what the yellow-hearted Captain Henry and the psalm-singing Captain John had done to me. This was about six months after my escape, during which time, incidentally, "Salem Sammy" had been killed while trying to make a get-away from the stir at Raleigh. The fact that many of my pals, "Rochester Red," "Frisco Eddie" and "Salem

Sammy," had gone to the beyond with their boots on never made me think that the same finish might be waiting for me at the end of the underworld trails. No—I never thought about that. I had absolutely no imagination in those days. I had only a bulldog faith in myself and plenty of guts. If I hadn't had the guts I would have died in the underworld.

I made the Tar Heels pay for what their prison masters did to me. I spent one winter in the state, during which time I plundered three of their banks, walking away with over $150,000, a portion of which went to a well-known Washington, D. C., politician for a pardon. The remainder of the nineteen year "bit" was off my shoulders. The Governor granted the pardon, so he said, because I had reformed, though I had no intention of reforming at that time. I was still a long way from reformation, still a long way from changing my point of view. I don't like the word "reform." So far as I can see I am still the same man, with the same brain working on a different slant. I repeat that I have not "reformed." I have merely changed my viewpoint.

I must tell a story in connection with one of the three Tar Heel robberies. There was a postmaster in one of the towns whose safe had been blown repeatedly. Every time a safe cracker wanted to collect a few hundred dollars, he went down to this town and knocked off the pete in the "obey." After every robbery the postmaster bought a new safe and every new safe was wrecked by the peter men. Eventually the Post Office Department at Washington tired of this incessant safe cracking business and they advised the postmaster to place all his funds, stamps, money, money orders and so on in the bank at the close of the day's business. He then made a deposit before the bank closed. It so happened that we came along the first night that he had deposited his funds in the bank. I observed that we had never collected any stamps in a bank before and I didn't get the reason until later on. I heard that after the robbery the postmaster wired the Post Office Department:

"Have followed your instructions relative to placing funds in bank every day. Put them in yesterday for the first time. Bank robbed last night. All my funds stolen. What'll I do now?"

I don't know what the Washington authorities told him to do!

About two years after my escape from "No'th C'lina," I received a letter from "Dayton Danny" asking me to visit him at his farm. He said he was worried about certain matters and wanted to talk them over with me. I hadn't seen the old boy in nearly four years. I was happy to hear from him. I took Billy along with me, intending to spend the summer with Danny.

Two children had been born, a nice-looking, red-headed boy, whom he named after me, so he said, and a little girl whom he had christened Mary Margaret. Kate, his wife, had grown tremendously fat. Danny, too, had taken on considerable weight. He looked great. He was brown as a berry and hard as nails, but I saw that something was wrong. I just had a hunch that he wasn't as happy as he should be. He confided in me one night. He told me that he had overreached himself, had spent too much money and had been compelled to go to the bank for a loan. There was a good-sized mortgage on the farm. He had flown high, stocked it with pedigreed cattle, pigs, chickens, horses. He was in debt up to his neck. The bank wanted their money. They threatened to cash in on the farm if he didn't come across with the dough.

I volunteered to let him have ten gran, thinking that would help him out. He said he needed more than that.

"How much more?" I inquired.

"About ten more," he told me.

"Twenty gran will fix you up?"

"Just about."

I offered him a check for ten gran, telling him to go to the banker and promise that he would come across with the balance in the fall. He refused the money.

"No," he said, "I'll go out with ye this fall and git what I need."

"You won't go out with me," I tried to discourage the idea, "not on your life. You're crazy to entertain such an idea. You've got a family to look after. Suppose something should happen to you?"

He ridiculed the idea of anything happening to him.

"Don't make me laugh, Jack," he said, "I'm too lucky, too careful, for that."

"But suppose it should happen," I went on, determined to talk him out of going back to the racket; "what about Kate and the kids? You're not playing on the up and up with them when you talk about going back to the racket again."

He was persistent. He declared that he was going out with us in the fall.

"Just one more job," he pleaded, "and then I'm through."

I edged Billy on him. I thought that between the two of us we would be able to talk him out of the idea. But Danny was one of those hard-headed tads that couldn't be talked out of anything once he made up his mind to do a thing.

"What the hell's come over ye mugs," he snarled, "turning preacher?"

We endeavored to point out to him that we were interested in seeing him stick to the straight and narrow on account of his family, and Billy tried to point out to him what a terrible tragedy it would be if Kate and the kids were left alone.

He resented our attitude.

"Now, listen," he declared, "this has gone far enough. I need dough. I'm not a cripple. I'm going out this fall and get what I need out of a jug. If ye guys don't want me, I'll git a gang of me own and work. Just one more job and I'm through fer all time."

We yielded, said no more about the matter and when we left his farm that fall for the bank-robbing tour, he came along. His wife knew absolutely nothing about what he had been, so she didn't know that he was going out to rob banks. He told her he was making a business trip with Billy and me, that we owned race horses and that he would be home within a week or ten days with enough money to square himself with the bank.

We had a fine mark in Virginia, a few miles out of Charlottesville. It was quite a good-sized town. It had two night watchmen and there was an all-night telephone office over the bank. We had three people to elevate before we went to work on the jug, the two night bulls and the telephone operator. We got all of them without any trouble and then we started to perform on the bank. "Dutch" and I did the blasting while

Danny and Billy stood watch outside. I had a streak of bad luck on the burglar-proof kiester. Instead of opening it with six shots, taking off a sheeting with every shot, I was making three shots to a sheeting. We should have finished the job in an hour and a half. It required three hours and I was blasting away at the kiester when four o'clock struck. About quarter after four, just when I was preparing to give the kiester the last shot, Billy called me out of the bank.

"Somebody's coming down the street," he said; "better wait until we stick 'em up before you make that last shot."

We all stood inside the bank until the people came along. We could hear them laughing and talking. When they got in front of the bank we stepped out and ordered them to throw up their hands. There were two young men and two young girls returning from a dance. The girls were scared to death. We were masked. They couldn't see our faces.

"Don't be alarmed, ladies," Billy spoke to them, "we're not going to harm you. We're bank burglars robbing the bank. We've got to detain you, but nobody will molest you, be assured of that."

One of the girls smiled.

"This is thrilling," she said, "held up by gentlemanly bank burglars."

Billy began to spill some of his hoity-toity English.

"One can be a gentleman," he said, "even if one is a bank burglar. A first class bank burglar, ladies, is an artist of a sort. You may not believe it, but it's the truth."

He had the girls grinning before I went inside to make the last shot on the kiester.

Then he started in again.

"You will pardon us," he said, "if we take you ladies and gentlemen in the bank and tie you up. You see, self-preservation is the word now that we have completed the job. If we were to let you go, you would undoubtedly notify the citizens that we have robbed the bank; therefore we must resort to the expedient of detaining you until we have made our escape. We hate to do it, ladies, but we've got it to do."

He led them into the bank, where we tied them in chairs. Day was breaking as we wended our way out of the town.

We covered about four miles before we went into the jungles and stashed (hid).

Danny's share of the proceeds was enough to square himself at the bank. He was one happy Irishman.

"Well, b'ys," he said, "I've got what I need and now I'm through with the racket for the rest of me loife."

Billy laughed at him.

"What's the laugh, Billy?" Danny looked at him.

"Danny," Billy replied, "you'll never be a square-shooter. It's absolutely impossible for you to be a square-shooter."

"This is me last job, so help me God, it is," Danny declared.

"No," Billy was still laughing, "you'll be back again. It's in your blood, Danny, it's in your blood. You'll be a grifter all your life."

"I tell ye, Billy," Danny snapped convincingly, "this is me last job; so help me God, I'll never go out again."

"I hope so, Danny," Billy went on, "I hope so for the sake of Kate and the kids; but I'm afraid that you're the sort of fellow that never sticks to a resolution. But I'll tell you one thing, Danny,"—Billy leaned over, looked Danny in the eyes and laid his hand on his shoulder,—"I'll tell you one thing, Danny," he repeated, "you'll never go out with me again."

"Those are my sentiments," I cut in. "You're a married man with a family and you oughtn't to be taking chances out on the racket."

"I'm through, b'ys," the Irishman declared. "So help me God, this is me last job."

About eleven o'clock that night we proceeded to move. We had mapped out our get-away, a perfectly safe one. We were going to hike thirty-five miles across the country to another railroad, where we could catch a train for Washington.

We walked through the woods a mile or two, coming out on the edge of a big field. We didn't know where we were, didn't know which way to turn to hit a road. We stopped to get our bearings. Presently we heard the sound of an automobile horn off to the left.

"We go east," Dutch suggested. We started across the field landing on a county road.

"Which way now, b'ys?" Danny asked.

"Just a minute," Billy said, "just a minute. Where's the North Star?" He gazed up at the star-bedecked sky. "There's the Dipper," he said, "now where's the North Star? There she is. We go south. Come on."

We started on our journey again.

Danny was rolling a cigarette. He was in a fine mood. He drew the smoke into his lungs and blew it out again.

"Ha," he grunted, "it's a relief to git that bank off me shoulders, b'ys. Kate'll be tickled to death when I git back with all this darby [money]."

"Where y' going to tell her you got it?" Dutch asked him.

"Ah," he drawled, "nivir mind about that. Kate'll not be interested in that."

Suddenly a fusillade of shots rang out, followed by yells and curses and commands of hands up.

Danny hit the ground gasping:

"Jasus, Jasus, they got me, b'ys, they got me!"

We crawled into the woods, dragging Danny along with us and shooting as we went. He was moaning agonizingly. The blood was streaming from a wound in his breast. We opened his shirt. They had "plugged" him through the left lung. "St. Louis Dutch" had been shot in the left arm. Danny was dying. Billy had his head resting on his leg. Billy was talking to him, trying to cheer him a little, telling him that he wasn't badly hurt and that we would take him to a doctor. While Billy was talking Danny straightened out, a corpse. We stripped his pockets, destroyed everything that could identify him and then left him—to try to fight our way through. The natives had us surrounded. They were still yelling and shooting like a gang of drunken Indians. I was more concerned about poor Danny, his wife and kids, than I was about the infuriated posse, from whom we got away before morning.

We tossed a coin to see who should break the news to Kate. I was stuck. Here was one of the most unpleasant missions that I have ever undertaken. If Kate had been aware of the fact that Danny was a grifter it would have been much easier.

"How am I going to break the news to her about Danny being a grifter?" I asked Billy.

"For Christ's sake, Jack," Billy snapped, "use your brains. Don't tell her anything about Danny being on the grift."

Billy and I got into an argument over whether or not Kate should be told that Danny was a crook. He finally consented to go with me to the farm. A word picture of what occurred is beyond my powers of description! I can only say that the poor woman was crushed when we broke the news to her. Billy told her that Danny was run over by a passenger train outside of Wilmington, Delaware, and that he had been so terribly mutilated that we buried him there. We left Danny's bit of the robbery with her and then Dutch, Billy and I gave her one-half of our share.

It was Danny's last job! He had grifted for twenty years without a fall (arrest), but he eventually paid a staggering penalty for all his so-called successes!

There is no such thing as success in the crime world! I know! I had been in the game now about twelve years and I had seen three of the cleverest in the business cash in with their boots on. If I had had any imagination in those days, I think I would have waked up to the realization that I was in a game where the cards were stacked against me!

CHAPTER XI

REVENGE ON THE "BROOKLYN SHINE"

"TORONTO BILLY" talked culture to me the summer following "Dayton Danny's" tragic finish. Most of his chatter went in one ear and out of the other. I couldn't see the highbrow stuff, regardless of what Billy said.

I had heard one opera the year before when I went to New York with him and that was enough for me, though some of the "Rigoletto" music was buried in my brain and now and then it would come back to me and I would hum or whistle a few bars of an aria.

He talked to me about associating with men and women a notch above me. Somehow or other I had a flair for the dese, dose and dem boys. I presume I liked them primarily because they were so much like myself. I have heard it said that like attracts like.

Billy talked books from morn till night. He raved about men I had never heard of before, Balzac, Oscar Wilde, Swinburne, Kipling and many others. One night he handed me Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray.* I read three or four pages and tossed it aside. He handed me a book of Swinburne's poems. I couldn't see them at all. Kipling was in the same class. But he recited "Gunga Din" once. I had never heard it before. It captured my fancy. I liked it. I read it over again and again and then I memorized it and never failed to get it off my chest when around women or a crowd of safe crackers. Another time he recited a few verses from Swinburne's "Triumph of Time." I asked him who wrote it. When he told me Swinburne, I was interested. I read that poem. I liked it. I didn't know, at that time, what there was in the poem that appealed to me. I just admired it without knowing why. I didn't know, at that time, that I was waking up. I had absolutely no idea that I was on my way to better things. I was looking up, but I couldn't see anything. I

didn't know Beauty when I saw it, but away down in my heart I felt that I wanted to say something, but I couldn't say it. I could only stammer and stumble. The purple passages of the poets captivated me. I carried a book of Kipling and Swinburne with me. I eventually sidetracked Kipling. I preferred Swinburne. It seemed to me that there was music in him, a beat and a rhythm that grabbed and held me. I loved Swinburne.

But these moments of admiration for the poets were sporadic, short-lived. I would read them for a day and then forget them and go back to the blood and thunder, climb for tall grass, shoot the lights out of some sort of literature. Detective stories and the *Police Gazette* and other two-for-a-nickel periodicals were my speed. In other words, my mental evolution was a slow-moving process. I was on my way slowly, but surely, but I didn't know it.

Billy wanted to retire. He was getting sick of the game.

"There's a fall coming," he said. "We can't go on all the time. Sooner or later we get what's coming to us."

I ridiculed his idea of a fall. He wanted to go in business.

"One more job," he declared, "and I'm through. I'm going into business before they get me as they got Danny, Sammy and the rest of them."

He proposed that we make one more touch and then ramble into New York and open up a café. I couldn't see his proposition. I didn't want to quit. I couldn't quit. I loved the racket.

He had saved considerable money and was determined that the next job was going to be the last one.

We went out to pull his last job. It was his mark. He had located it, looked it up, worked out the get-away and attended to all the other preliminaries. The town was in Delaware, down near the Maryland line, a short distance from Delmar and about ninety-five miles from Wilmington. I didn't particularly like the job because we had to make a train get-away out of the town. The train get-away would be impossible if we got a tumble while we were working. If we didn't get the tumble, why the train get-away would be fine business. But if we got the tumble it was a hundred to one that we wouldn't get away. Billy talked me into sidetracking

my objections to the job, so we rambled down to knock off the jug.

The job was a success in every way. We pulled it off without a tumble and made the train get-away with a little over $12,000 to New Castle, Delaware, where we got off and planted in the woods until night.

We walked into the west yards of the P.B.&W.R.R. at Wilmington, intending to catch a freight train into Baltimore. On the way into the west yards we got to discussing a notorious nigger, "Brooklyn Shine," who dangled up and down the P.B.&W.R.R. between Wilmington and Baltimore with two other coons, "The Riverside Shine" and "Boston Yellow," sticking up berry pickers, oyster dredgers and other unfortunates that worked a week or two for a stake to get ragged up (dressed up). "Brooklyn Shine" and his gang had dozens of notches on their smoke wagons. It was a common thing for the trackwalkers along the P.B.&W. to find the mutilated remains of a tramp or two every day in the week. Now and then the trackwalkers found men with their bodies literally riddled with bullets. A dead tramp never caused very much comment and the police in the towns along the line didn't concern themselves very much about the activities of the black-skinned murderers. We discussed the "Brooklyn Shine" and his gang as we headed for the west yards in Wilmington.

"Wouldn't it be a riot," Dutch said, "if we met the 'Brooklyn Shine' and his gang and they stuck us up and took all this dough from us?"

"Well," Billy replied, "don't treat it so lightly, for we may bump into them."

"I'd give all I've got to meet that nigger and his mob," Dutch went on, "for they's a gang of bad niggers. I'd like to shoot it out with them."

"I have no ambition to shoot it out with anybody," Billy answered, "but if I've got to, why then, I want to shoot first and talk afterwards."

"Brooklyn Shine" had a unique system of sticking up the John O'Brien riders. He worked out of Wilmington to Baltimore and out of Baltimore to Wilmington. When a freight train pulled out of the yards, he and his gang boarded the car

next to the engine. Ten or twelve miles out of the yards they started to prowl. With the aid of a rope ladder which had two hooks on it, they climbed from one car to the other. The hooks on the end of the rope ladder were fastened to the running board on top of the box car. When they located a car that had one or more tramps in it, they shut the doors. Then they lighted a candle, drew their guns and ordered everybody up in the corner of the car with their faces to the side of the car and their hands in the air. If a man didn't obey the command, he was either killed or compelled to hit the grit (jump). Now and then some poor devil jumped, hit the embankment, rolled back under the wheels and was ground to pieces. I'm not romancing when I say that this gang of black-skinned killers slaughtered at least fifty or seventy-five tramps! That's the truth!

Now I didn't relish the idea of meeting these coons. They were bad niggers and I had no ambition to go gunning for them as Dutch had.

"Forget about those smokes," I argued with Dutch. "Let 'em alone."

"Forget about 'em, hell," Dutch roared back at me. "If they ever stick their noodles in the car that I git in, I kill all of 'em."

"Dutch is right," Billy said. "If they come in our car, we've got to kill 'em or stand for a stick-up, and God knows that I don't want to be stuck up by a gang of niggers. Neither do I want to kill."

There was a huge watering tank in the west yards where the "bums" congregated to wait for rattlers to Baltimore. On this particular night there must have been at least fifty of them. Further down the track there were three or four camp fires where another gang was congregated. They were a sad-looking lot of poor devils. Some of them were fairly well dressed. Most of them were ragged. The well-dressed boys were the Johns and the plingers, the professional tramps who could go out on the drag and get most anything they wanted. The poorly dressed boys were the dynamiters, shovel stiffs, Gay Cats, Ring Tails, Ding Bats, the men who couldn't beg successfully, who are not recognized by the Johns and who are detested because they work now and then. To the pro-

fessional tramp, the dyed-in-the-wool John, work is sacrilegious.

"Poor buggers," I thought, "how in the hell could anybody stick up those harmless, helpless-looking fellows."

We stood there, listening to them talk. We were well dressed, had watches, diamonds and pockets filled with coin of the realm. They had nothing but dirty, ragged clothes, poor shoes, vermin-ridden bodies and, probably, misery-ridden hearts; they were the derelicts from the bottom of the human Pit. We were the aristocrats from the underworld peaks.

Presently we saw three niggers approaching. They were well dressed.

"Maybe this is your friend, the 'Brooklyn Shine,' coming, Dutch," Bill spoke.

Dutch opened up his overcoat and pulled the muffler off his neck.

"What's the idea?" I asked him.

"I want him to see the rock in my tie," he replied, "and my slang an' super." Dutch was referring to his big four-carat diamond when he spoke of the "rock" in his tie. "Super" is the vernacular for watch, while "slang" means chain.

The niggers came up to the tank. They were looking the gang over. Dutch stood with his overcoat wide open and his hands in his pocket exposing his watch and chain and the "rock" in his necktie. One of the niggers, a big fellow standing over six feet and with a horrible-looking scar on his face, moved over to Dutch.

"Got a match, white folks?" he spoke to Dutch.

"Sure." Dutch handed him a match.

"Where y'all gwine, Baltimo'?" He struck the match and lighted a cigarette. He was peering at the rock in Dutch's tie while he was lighting the cigarette.

"Yeh, we're going to Baltimore," Dutch said. "How's the riding on this road?"

"Fine," the nigger replied, "dese shacks [brakemen] don't bother nobody."

He thanked Dutch for the match, walked to the other side of the tank and began to converse in a whisper with his two black friends.

"That's the 'Brooklyn Shine,' the big nigger with the scar

in his face," Dutch said. "See him rubbering at my rock?"

"Well," Billy spoke, "we better make up our minds what we're going to do, for those coons will probably try to elevate us when we get on the train."

"They may not get on the same train," I cut in.

"So much the better if they don't," Billy said; "but if they do why it's either they or us."

We planned what we would do. We decided that we wouldn't look for them, that we would avoid them if we could, but if they came swinging into our car on their rope ladder we were going to kill them.

"We won't shoot," Billy went on, "unless they try to stick us up."

"If they come in the car," Dutch argued, "that means that they's coming in to stick us up, so why not croak 'em just as soon as they swing in the car."

"No," Billy protested, "I can't kill a man cold-bloodedly. I don't want to kill these niggers without cause. We'll do this. If they shut both doors and light a candle when they get in the car, we'll be reasonably certain that they're going to elevate us. We'll have our cannons ready. Just as soon as they shout 'hands up' we'll beat them to the draw and blaze away at them."

A Baltimore-bound freight train pulled into the yards while we were talking. The bums made a dash for it. We watched the three niggers and they were watching us. We went to the middle of the train and got in an empty car. The three niggers went up to the front end of the train. We didn't see them get aboard. Presently the train pulled out of the yards. Billy and Dutch were looking out one side of the car and I the other side.

Billy said he didn't think the niggers had got on.

"Don't be foolish," Dutch laughed. "That big Shine got a flash at this rock of mine and I know he's on this rattler. Wait, we'll see 'em."

The freight was picking up speed as she went along. Billy and I sat down. Dutch was walking from one door to the other, peering ahead.

"I see them," he shouted. "Here, quick!"

We ran to the door and looked ahead. The fireman was

tossing coal into the engine. A flame lighted up the top and sides of the train. We could see the three nigger holdup men coming down the rope ladder and swinging into a car up at the other end of the train.

"They have begun to work," Billy spoke. "They're on their way back here, boys."

Dutch was all smiles. We continued to look ahead. A few minutes later we saw somebody leap out of the car, then another. We heard a faint cry as the train rambled by, uttered by the two bums whom the hold-up men evidently forced to hit the grit.

We stood there at the door, watching. We saw them go in another car. Everybody in that car must have obeyed their commands, because we didn't see anybody hit the grit. We saw the niggers come out, climb up the rope ladder, come down again and go in still another John O'Brien. Once again we saw bums jumping and as the train headed into a cut a fellow who jumped hit the embankment and rolled under the wheels of the train to his death.

"Christ!" Billy gasped and turned from the door. "See that guy go under?"

They kept climbing up and down the cars and going in and coming out until they got to the one in front of us, which was filled with hoboes. Nobody jumped out of that car. The boys probably obeyed the commands of the stick-up men.

"We'll get ready," Billy said. "Get up here in the corner of the car and stick your rods up your sleeves."

We stood in the corner of the car. Presently the rope ladder was dropped. It was swinging in the breeze. In a moment the big nigger, the "Brooklyn Shine," came down the ladder, followed by his two pals. He closed one of the doors. The two niggers closed the other door, while the Shine was lighting the candle.

"White folks,"—the "Brooklyn Shine" started over to where we were standing,—"put up yer——"

Before he could utter the word "hands" we blazed away at them. The candle that he had lighted toppled off the side of the car, plunging the John O'Brien into darkness. Our targets were the blue-white flashes which flared up every time they shot. We were on our stomachs after the "glim" was

extinguished. In the midst of the battle we heard a dull thud like somebody falling, followed with a deep agonizing groan and a wild scream, after which the door was swung open and a nigger jumped. They stopped shooting.

"Flash the glim," Dutch spoke.

I threw on the electric pocket lamp.

We got up and moved slowly over to where two of the coons were stretched out on the floor in a pool of blood. The "Brooklyn Shine" was dead. Somebody's bullet had plowed its way right through his head into his brain. "Boston Yellow's" body was literally riddled with bullets; he, too, was a corpse. The "Riverside Shine" was the one that had jumped. He had dropped his gun in the car before he jumped. "Toronto Billy" was shot twice, once in the shoulder and once in the left arm. A bullet had plowed its way through the crown of my Dunlap, inflicting a slight scalp wound. Dutch escaped any sort of injury.

In those days there was a certain detective in Baltimore with whom I was intimate. About two weeks after the "Brooklyn Shine" affair, I met this dick in one of the Baltimore hotels. We got to talking about different things. Suddenly he mentioned "Brooklyn Shine."

"Ever meet that dinge?" he asked me.

I was on my guard immediately. I had a hunch that my friend knew a thing or two about Shine's death.

" 'Brooklyn Shine'?" I muttered. "Seems that I have heard that name before."

"Haven't run across him, have y'?"

"No, Pete," I replied, "I haven't."

"I'd like to know where he is."

"This guy's trying to feel me out," I soliloquized. "He probably has received a tip that we killed 'the Shine' and his pal 'Boston Yellow.' "

I stalled along with the dick.

"Have you got a rap [charge] against the nigger?" I was still a little curious and suspicious.

"Yes," he replied, "and a bad one, too."

"What is it?"

"Murder," he said, "one of the dirtiest that was ever pulled off. He went into a home in Canton to prowl it and while in

the place he raped a sixteen year old kid, after which he strangled her to death."

I thought he was lying to me.

"How do you know, Pete, that it was the 'Brooklyn Shine'?"

"Finger prints," he went on. "We got a print off a table. He's got a record a yard long."

I asked him when the murder occurred. He told me. The next day I visited the office of the Baltimore *Sun*. Sure enough, I found the story of the murder and a reference to the finger prints of the "Brooklyn Shine." He was telling me the truth. I telephoned him that night.

"Pete," I said, "you asked me about the 'Brooklyn Shine.' For once in my life I'm going to give a copper information. That nigger's in hell."

"In hell?" There was a ring to his voice which indicated that he didn't understand.

Then I told him the story of the battle on the freight train.

CHAPTER XII

AFFAIRS WITH THE LADIES

THE philosophy of the old-time bank burglar that women couldn't be trusted and that the cracksman who had a steady "cow" should be sidetracked was gradually passing into the discard. The young blood, the rising generation that was drifting into the underworld of the bank burglar, labeled that philosophy "a bughouse idea." And it was.

We young fellows began to cultivate the ladies. The old-timers, like "Roman Catholic Mike," "A.P.A. Billy," "Trot 'Em Out Pete," "Michigan Red" the "Wild Cat," "Seldom Seen and Seldom Fed," ostracized us. They said we were "cow-simple." They wouldn't associate with us. They said it was only a matter of time until we landed in the boob.

"Let 'em play the cows," Mike declared, "and it won't be long before they'll be on the inside looking out. There never was a grifter that had a steady cow that didn't land in the boob."

We laughed at the old boys and went after the ladies. We told the Rip Van Winkles of the crime trail that they were ancient and foolish and that an underworld without women, sweethearts and wives, was the most uninteresting and unattractive place on earth. We tried to convince Mike and the other veterans of the crime world that we were right and they were wrong. It was useless. They blacklisted us. They sent the information throughout the underworld to steer clear of us and whenever we met one of the gray-haired peter men they gave us a wide berth.

I was one of the first to rebel against the time-honored tradition that women were dangerous and that men who associated with them were dangerous. My rebellion occurred in Baltimore after the "Brooklyn Shine" battle. I was flush with money. I had sent Mom her customary allowance and was making the rounds of the Baltimore dance and music halls

looking for a swell chick. I met what I considered, at that time, the swellest chick that God ever created! I fell, so I thought, madly in love with her the first time I laid my eyes on her. She was a fine-looking, well-built blonde. She was doing a single singing and dancing act in the Star Music Hall, where knock-'em-down-and-drag-'em-out skirmishes occurred nightly. Patrons sat at tables sipping beer and swallowing champagne and whisky, while the stage ladies did their stuff. The Star Music Hall was some joint!

"I've got to make that dame," I said to myself. "She's a pip. I've got to make her some way or other."

I moved up to a table near the stage and ordered a bottle of Mumms. I tipped the waiters generously. I tried to flirt with the blonde. She wouldn't give me a tumble. I was discouraged. I got up and left the music hall. I met "Roman Catholic Mike" later on that night. I began to tell him about the swell-looking chick in the Star Music Hall.

"Don't get cow crazy," he admonished me. "Take a tip from an old timer, Jack, don't get cow crazy. Keep away from the cows and you'll keep out of the stirs."

"But you ought to see this cow, Mike," I pleaded with him. "She's a darb, a wonder, a pip. If you ever got a flash at her, Mike, you'd fall for her yourself."

"Listen," he said, "no cow in the world could make me, Jack. They all look alike to me, kid. I've been looking at 'em for thirty-nine years and I haven't tied up with one yet and I never will; play 'em once in a while, broncho, but don't tie up with 'em."

"You ought to see her," I interrupted him with a description of the blonde.

"They're no good," he went on; "they've sent more grifters to the stir than all the bulls in the world. Look at Cleopatra and the rest of them dizzy dames of ancient history, and what they did to the cow-simple mugs that fell for 'em. If y' git cow-simple, kid, y' can't associate with any of the old-timers."

Mike's remarks about the cows, ancient and modern, went in one ear and out the other. This blonde had me going and I was determined to make her. I played the Star Music Hall night after night. I spent my dough like "Coal Oil Johnny." I resorted to every amateurish move in an effort to make

her, without any success. She just looked at me and went on with her stuff. Finally one night the proprietor of the joint woke up to the fact that I was a first-class sucker. He looked at me and smiled knowingly and then he spoke, introducing himself.

"My name is Howard," I said; "have a drink."

I bought him wine. He could drink it like a fish. He invited three or four girls over to the table. I caught them throwing the ten-dollar-a-quart Mumms into the cuspidors, but I didn't say anything. I wanted to meet that blonde, so I bought the wine as fast as they could throw it into the cuspidors. I bought all the wine in the house.

Then the "prop" got curious about my business. I told him that I was the son of a wealthy cotton broker from the South.

"Like any of my girls?" he asked me.

I could have kissed him when he asked that question. But I was timid and bashful. Now that I had an opportunity to meet the blonde I hesitated about telling the proprietor of the joint that I admired her.

"No," I replied, "I'm not much of a mug for the dames."

Just then the blonde came out to do a turn.

"There's a nice girl," I said to him, "who's she? What's her name?"

"Winnie Brewer," he said. "Ain't she a knock-out?"

I agreed with him.

"Like to meet her?"

"Sure, introduce me and send out for some more wine." I was thrilled.

I was tongue-tied when the prop gave me the knock-down. My experiences with women had been limited. I didn't know how to perform. I didn't know how to talk. Winnie probably saw that I was a regular eighteen-carat sap, so she proceeded to put the works on me, proceeded to take me like Grant took Richmond. She was much older than I. She was around thirty-two while I was twenty-five or six. We began to put away the Mumms. I saw her tossing it into the old cuspidor. She drank very little and I didn't mind her tossing the ten-dollar-a-bottle grape juice into the cuspidor.

I had peculiar ideas in those days of how to make a hit with

a broad. I thought the best way to win them was by spending like a Crœsus, so while Winnie sat at the table with me I tipped the waiter five dollars every time he served a bottle of wine and gave all the girls presents of fifty-dollar bills. Naturally Winnie began to work on me. She was interested. She began to call me "dear" and "darling." I was thrilled to death. I ate the endearing terms and hungered for more of them. It never occurred to me for a minute that she was bulling me when she professed her love for me an hour after I had met her.

Well, I immediately developed a romantic streak. I began to moralize with her about working in a joint like the Star Music Hall and she in turn began to talk about her "career." I compared her with all the wonderful women in the world. I wanted to say beautiful things to her, but couldn't. Here is where I thanked the gods for bringing "Toronto Billy" into my life. I went to Billy for help. I told him how I felt toward Winnie.

"I'm bugs about her," I told him, "but I don't know what to say to her."

Billy "framed" up a lot of highbrow cracks for me. I memorized them and handed them to Winnie. She ate 'em up. This encouraged me to hand her more. I went to Swinburne and Oscar Wilde. I was determined to impress her with the belief that I was an unusual lover. I thought she loved me; so I was ready to resort to any measures to win her for all time. It seemed to me that life wouldn't be worth a dime without that blond music-hall dame!

Every day I memorized a verse out of Wilde or Swinburne and when we sat at one of the tables in the music hall between her acts, I would recite them to her. One night I handed her a verse of Wilde's:

> "Your eyes are like fantastic moons
> That shiver in some stagnant lake,
> Your tongue is like a scarlet snake
> That dances to fantastic tunes."

She said she loved that, but when I told Billy that I had recited it to her and that she adored it he laughed:

"What's the noise about?" I asked.

"What a dumb-bell that cow must be!" Billy roared.

"Why?"

"Why, that's a poem about a cat," he said.

"Then she is no more of a yap than I am," I replied, "because I didn't know that I was talking about cats when I recited that verse."

The knowledge that Winnie was a yap encouraged me to go on. Now I figured her to be inferior to me instead of superior. I framed up speeches in which Wilde and Swinburne predominated. I talked to her about "the bright fine lips so cruelly curled and the strange swift eyes where the soul sits free."

I told her I was college bred. She was an awful dunce. She believed me. I proposed marriage. She spoke of her "career." She was nothing more than a ham of the worst sort; nevertheless, she raved about her "career" and the day when her name would be in blazing white lights over the entrance of some Broadway theater. I couldn't see the ham in her at that time. I thought she was great; so I fell for the stardom hokum. I plundered banks right and left to supply her wants. I bought her sables, gold garter buckles studded with diamonds and inscribed with "To my love, Winnie, from her sweetheart, Jack." I bought her jewels, boxes of silk stockings, boxes of hats. I gave that dame everything and then I suddenly decided that she was an egg and that I didn't love her at all.

Then came Elsie, another broad with a "career." Elsie was younger than Winnie and better looking and cleverer. What Elsie didn't do to me isn't worth talking about. She really took me hook, line and sinker. She sent me through for about $25,000 in three months. She had me on the go night and day knocking off jugs to get her dough. She had me bow-legged from running over the country looking for robbable banks. After three months with her I was as lean as a hound dog. But I was sure Elsie loved me. I was sure I loved her. Then came the awakening. Elsie didn't love me. Elsie was playing me. She was keeping a big masculine doll on my money. When I learned that she had given me the needle I was furious and then heartbroken. I wanted to die. I was unspeakably miserable. I began to drown my sorrows in

drink. Billy pleaded with me to forget those ham and egg broads. One night's drunk and Elsie was a back number.

I sidetracked the music-hall dames after my experience with Elsie and Winnie. They left me with the conviction, which I still have, that most stage ladies are gold-diggers, hard-boiled, heads-I-win-and-tails-you-lose gold-diggers.

Thereafter I played shopgirls, played them by the dozens in every city and town that I entered. They were not so hungry and they were infinitely more appreciative. I soon learned that I spoiled dames by tossing money into their laps and buying them gold garter buckles studded with diamonds. I was a student. I was learning as I rambled along the old underworld trail. I might have been on that trail to-day if I hadn't been a student.

I had been in the crime world about twelve years now. I had been, according to underworld standards of success, an unusually successful cracksman. I had stolen around a quarter of a million dollars and had served about four years in prison, but somehow or other I wasn't exactly happy. I never entertained the idea of capture. On occasion I had thought about going straight. These flairs for the straight and narrow were short-lived until I was arrested in a New England State for the robbery of a bank that I didn't rob.

It occurred about the latter part of August. I withhold the name of the town and state for personal reasons. You will understand later on. I was "nailed" in a town about ten miles from where the bank was robbed. The police force of the town, the chief and five officers, nailed me while I was purchasing a ticket for Montreal. They bore me to the ground and put the shackles on me and carted me over to the scene of the robbery. It was a summer resort where the aristocracy of the state spent their summers. Evidently everybody had been notified that I was being brought over to the resort and county seat, for when I arrived with the six officers the station was jammed with men, women and children anxious to get a look at the bank burglar. All business had been temporarily suspended. Every inhabitant of the town was there at the station and when I stepped off the train I heard nothing but:

"He's only a young fellow. Isn't it a shame? Isn't he

nice looking? He doesn't look like a bank burglar," and a hundred other friendly cracks.

The sheriff lived in a pretentious mansion close by the jail. The army of bulls led me over to the jail, which was near a big hotel surrounded by a spacious lawn. As I crossed the lawn I passed a crowd of young girls. There was one unusually pretty girl in the crowd. She smiled at me. I raised my manacled hands to my head and lifted my hat and smiled at her.

"By God," I thought to myself, "she's a swell-looking kid."

She and the girls with whom she was standing on the lawn followed us over to the jail. The pretty girl stood close by, while the sheriff talked with the officers. Now and then I looked at her through the crowd. Every time I glanced at her, our eyes met and it seemed to me that I was able to read sympathy in them. The last time I looked at her, just before they took me into the jail, I saw tears in her eyes.

The sheriff was shooting questions at me, but I didn't know what he was talking about, for my mind was on that girl.

"She's wonderful," I was thinking. "I wonder who she is? I wonder what her name is. By God, I'd like to know her; she's wonderful."

And she was wonderful. I thought she was about nineteen or twenty. She was of medium height and weighed around a hundred and twenty-five. She had coal-black hair, and blue eyes with a straight look in them. I had never met a girl like her. I was sure of that. There was something about her that grabbed and held me and I immediately began to think hard on that love at first sight idea.

When all the excitement had died down, the sheriff came into the jail with four or five girls, among whom was the young lady in question. I had given the name of Kelly when I was committed to the jail.

"Kelly," the sheriff spoke, "these young ladies want to know if they can send you in any books."

The doll came up to the front of my cell. Right away I was tongue-tied, embarrassed. I couldn't look at her. I couldn't talk, but I could toss off all kinds of chatter to the other girls. Presently I got my bearings. I looked at the doll. She blushed and hung her head. I don't know what I said to her,

but I recall that I asked her name and then I told her that I should like to have a book of Swinburne's poems.

"You love poetry, Mr. Kelly?" one of the girls asked in a voice that indicated astonishment at a bank burglar asking for a book of poems.

"Yes," I replied, "I love poetry."

If I had asked for the *Police Gazette,* Laura Jean Libbey or Nick Carter, it wouldn't have created any comment, but a cracksman asking for the verse of Swinburne flabbergasted the ladies. The sheriff stood by with mouth and eyes wide open and then he introduced me to the girls, after which they asked me to tell them how I became a bank robber. I protested that I was not a bank robber and all the while the doll gazed at me with longing eyes and whenever I looked at her I was thrilled, speechless! No woman had ever affected me as that girl did. I had never seen anybody like her. She made me forget that I was in jail or that I was on my way for a long stretch in the stir. I began to thank the gods for this arrest. I began to weave all sorts of wonderful dreams about the future and the doll Josephine.

"Fine business," I thought. "I'll use her. I'll get her to bring me saws and I'll beat this joint."

But that conclusion would not stay with me. I began to moralize with myself.

"I might get her in a jam," I decided. "She's too damn nice to compromise. That wouldn't be so good."

The next day she brought me the book of poems and Dante's "Inferno."

There was a note in one of the books. I've never forgotten that note.

"I'm so sorry for you," it read. "I love you. I wish I had never heard you speak or seen you smile, but now it's too late."

The note electrified me. I had had a few love letters from women, but none of them thrilled me like Josephine's.

"Well," I said to myself, "I've had an affair or two, but I guess this one is the real thing. I love this girl; yes, I love her with all my heart and soul."

She was my Madonna. I was positive of that. She was

so damn nice and clean and high-minded. I was sure that she loved me when she volunteered to sneak saws in to me so that I could cut my way to liberty.

"Suppose you're caught, then what?" I asked her.

She said she didn't care so long as I made my escape.

"No," I said to her, "I won't let you do that. I want to get away from here, but I'm not going to let you jeopardize yourself. I'd rather go to prison for the rest of my life."

I confessed to her that I was a bank burglar.

"But I'm absolutely innocent of this robbery. I didn't rob this bank," I declared.

Before the date of my trial rolled around she had left the summer resort to attend a private school in Boston. We corresponded. She wrote me daily under an assumed name and I wrote her every day. Every letter contained some reference to what I might become if I would only try. She touched the man in me and I at once resolved to go straight regardless of the outcome of my trial. I didn't think they could convict me because I was innocent.

But before my trial came, the police had dug up my record. I knew then that any jury in the world would convict me if they ever heard my record read in court. I was aware of the fact that they couldn't introduce the record if I didn't take the stand in my defense. But on the other hand I realized that if I didn't take the stand that I was as good as convicted. I decided to take the stand. I told the court and jury that I was a professional bank burglar, that I had been a criminal all my life, but that I was dead innocent of the charge at hand. They convicted me and I was sentenced to serve six years in one of the toughest prisons that ever decorated the North American continent.

CHAPTER XIII

"BREAKING CONVICTS" IN NEW ENGLAND

THE Warden of the New England prison was a fanatic on the subject of "breaking convicts." He came within an ace of breaking my heart and on more than one occasion I came within an ace of killing him. He almost dynamited my ambition to go straight. He was the toughest man and the cruelest I have ever met! And he was religious. All the tough prison men I have known were religious or at least they pretended to be. "Burly Sam," as the convicts christened him, was a psalm-singer from away back.

He was a hell of a looking fellow in many ways. He stood six feet five in his stocking feet and weighed around two hundred and seventy-five pounds. He had a tremendous, bald, egg-shaped head that was decorated with numerous scars, mementos of battles with wild-eyed cons who had slugged him with pieces of pipe, hammers, shoe lasts and other things. He had the most peculiar eyes. They were extraordinarily large eyes and always covered with the long heavy lids which gave one the impression that he was half asleep or dozing. They were the eyes of a dope fiend, except when he was preparing to punish a convict, at which time they glistened with cruelty and terror. He took such a delight in torturing prisoners that I finally got the impression that he was a maniac and so I wrote many letters to newspapers, suggesting that they have an alienist examine him. These letters did not go through the office.

He began to "work on me" just as soon as I landed in the prison.

"Well," he said, "I guess you're innocent, ain't y'?"

"Dead innocent, sir," I replied.

"By Jesus," he laughed as he twirled the gray, nicotine-stained mustache between his fingers, "innocent, eh?"

"Yes, sir, I'm innocent."

"Did you ever break the law, ever commit a crime?"

"Hundreds of them," I answered.

"Well, I'll be damned," he shouted, "you're the first crook that ever told me that he was a lawbreaker. Well, well," he lay back in the chair and roared with laughter, "by God, that's good."

He squirted a stream of tobacco juice into the cuspidor.

"Now, Kelly," he went on, "y' been sent here to be punished —y' know that, don't y'?"

"Yes, I know that."

"Yes?" he roared. "Yes what?"

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"Don't fergit where y' are," he continued to intimidate me; "whenever I or any of the rest of the officers speak to y' always answer yes, sir, and always take off yer hat."

"I'll try to obey the rules," I said.

"Try?" he shouted. "To hell with that trying stuff. That ain't enough; y' got to *do* it and if y' *don't* do it, why, then y' git hell for breakfast, dinner and supper. Y' got to be meek and lowly if y' want to git along with me."

I could see that he was trying to pick an argument with me, so I strangled my feelings and said nothing.

"You won't have any trouble with me, Warden," I said to him. "I know where I am. I'm not looking for trouble. Treat me right and we'll be good friends."

"That's the spirit." He hit the cuspidor with another stream of tobacco juice.

When I left "Burly Sam's" office I felt that it was only a matter of time until he would give me a slugging. I just felt that I was in the hands of a rough rider and that I was doomed for a siege that would break the heart of a stoic. I was right!

The prisoners were worked on contract labor in the shoe shops. The contractors dictated the policies of the institution. Whatever they said went. There was absolutely no attempt to reform men. The prison was self-supporting. The only thing about which everybody was concerned was profit, dollars and cents, dividends earned by the sweat and blood of lawbreakers. We worked from seven in the morning till six in the evening with thirty minutes for lunch. We ate and slept

and responded to the calls of nature in little vermin-ridden cells that were damp and musty from one year's end to the other. Not once during the two years and nine months that I was in the prison did they air the bedding. There was a sickening stench in the cells and cell house from one year's end to the other which would have turned the stomach of a turkey buzzard. Lice and bedbugs were common things. Sound, uninterrupted sleep was a luxury enjoyed only by the cons who spent an hour or two burning the vermin out of the beds and the holes in the walls before they retired.

Once I complained to Sam about bedbugs. I asked him to have my bedding taken out and aired. I told him I couldn't sleep at night.

"Well, for Christ's sake," he roared, "where in the hell do y' think y' are, in a hotel?"

I hated to see Saturday arrive. The shops were closed at noon. We were locked in our cells from Saturday noon until Monday morning, with the exception of an hour on the Sabbath when we were marched into the chapel to hear a pin-headed minister talk about the tender mercies of Jesus Christ.

In the opening paragraph of this chapter I made the statement that "Burly Sam" was the toughest and cruelest man I had ever met. I withdraw that statement and pass the laurel wreath to Sam's assistant, the shoe-shop boss, Bill Meyer.

Bill Meyer began where "Burly Sam" left off. Meyer was a rat from the top of his little five-and-seven-eighths head to the bottom of his feet! Here was a yellow-hearted, cowardly skunk. It was Meyer who made me give up all ideas of reformation and why in the name of God I didn't cut out this little Yankee's guts I have never been able to understand. For thirteen months that little cold-blooded shoe-shop boss gave me hell from seven in the morning until six at night. He was after me all the time. Day in and day out I did my task. I was one of the few men in the prison that could do the task. I was one of the few men in the prison that didn't talk with him. I didn't like him primarily because he was cruel. He tried to make a friend out of me. I didn't respond. I detested him. The only time I talked with him was when I wanted information about my work.

One day he referred to my swell-headedness. He told me

that I wasn't any better than any of the rest of the cons. He wanted to know why I didn't talk with him. I told him why. It angered him.

"I'll git Sam to work on you some day," he snarled. "He'll take some of that swell head out of you, Mr. Kelly."

Now he was a little dried-up, anemic-looking fellow and I could have cleaned him up in about ten seconds. If we had been on equal footing he would have never ventured to bawl me out. No game man would take advantage of a fellow simply because his hands were tied. I swallowed all of Meyer's taunts because I wanted to get out. I wanted to reform. I wanted to see Josephine as soon as possible. I knew that "Burly Sam" would give me hell if I had an argument with Meyer. I knew that he would cut out my letter-writing privileges and the one bright spot in the unending, soul-twisting prison grind was that Sunday letter from Josephine. I used to count the hours from one Sunday to the other. Throughout the week I read and reread her letters until I had memorized them word for word. I was acting the lamb for her sake. I didn't want to lose that Sunday letter. I was undergoing the tortures of Hell so that I wouldn't lose it.

But I finally broke. One day Meyer drove me to desperation. There was a little Jewish boy working next to me named Bennie Lowenthal. Bennie was tubercular. He couldn't do the task. Meyer was after him all the time. When things broke well with me, when my stock ran well, when I wasn't held up, I could do my task in six hours, and on these days I would help out Bennie so that Meyer wouldn't have him punished for failing to do the task.

I couldn't help Bennie on the day in question. The stock had been bad. I was behind when Meyer took the report of work completed. Bennie was behind. Meyer came along the line with his book. He stopped at Bennie's bench. He began to curse the tubercular convict. Then he hit the kid, who was just nineteen. He came to my bench.

"So you're behind, too, eh?" he snarled. "Guess you need the water cure or the paddle."

I banged him on the jaw and he went down and out for the count. The guard blew the riot whistle. Five heavily armed keepers came dashing into the shoe shop. They es-

corted me over to "Burly Sam's" office. Meyer followed a few minutes later and told Sam that I had assaulted him, whereupon Sam ordered me to the bull pen for the water cure.

I thought I knew a thing or two about punishment until I was given the water cure. Anything that the Southern prison keepers had done to me was kindergarten stuff compared with the water cure.

They stripped me naked when they got me to the bull pen. It was in the latter part of December and there wasn't any heat in the bull pen; consequently I began to shiver. "Burly Sam" and Meyer laughed at me.

"Y' ain't done no shivering yet," Sam said. "Wait a few minutes, old boy, and y'll shake yerself to death."

There was a bathtub in the corner of the bull pen. They filled it with ice-cold water. Then they sat me in it and fastened my arms and hands to the sides of the tub. They also fastened my ankles to the bottom of the tub with iron clamps. The tub, you will please understand, was built for the water cure. They put an iron collar around my neck. Every time I moved, the clamps on my ankles, wrists and neck cut into the skin. But that wasn't all. The worst was yet to come. "Burly Sam" played a hose around my face. The water was cold, it seemed colder than the water in the tub. He kept playing the stream around my nostrils. I was gasping for breath. I opened my mouth. That's why Sam was playing the hose around my nostrils. He wanted me to open my mouth so that he could shoot the stream into my mouth. I felt myself growing dizzy. My lungs and heart and stomach seemed to be freezing. I was numb from head to feet. Suddenly everything turned black. When I woke up I was lying on the stone floor of a dungeon in the bull pen. I didn't know how long I had been there until a guard brought me some bread and water. He said I had been in the dungeon two hours.

"Then I've been out two hours?" I asked him.

"Just about," he laughed.

The water cure gave me pneumonia. I was in the hospital for two months, during which time I never heard from Josephine. Sam had taken all privileges away from me. I couldn't write or receive letters. That hurt me more than the water

cure. Tough as was the water cure, I would have been willing to take it every day in the week if "Burly Sam" had given me Josephine's letters. I begged him to let me write and receive my mail. He refused.

"If yer conduct is all right for three months I'll give y' back yer privileges," he replied; "but until them three months is up there's nothing doing."

Every prison has its underground channels and the New England madhouse was no exception to the rule. I found a way to get letters out and in. I paid a guard a hundred dollars a month to smuggle letters out and in. A hundred a month was big money for him. The State paid him fifty a month and board. He was a good fellow. I was happy now that I could write and receive letters from Josephine and Sam attributed the change in my conduct to the water cure that he had given me. He said that he had "broken" me. I think I could have cut out his heart and then lain down beside him and slept. I never hated a man as I hated "Burly Sam." Every time I saw him I wanted to kill him and he felt the same way about me.

Josephine told me in her letters that the papers throughout the State had contained many stories about my conduct in the prison. She said Sam had given out numerous interviews about me in which he pictured me as the toughest convict he had ever handled. She pleaded with me to be a good prisoner.

"You'll never get out of that place," she wrote, "if you don't be a good boy and obey the rules."

Sam had an ace-high reputation in the State. The citizens didn't know him! He was "a member of the church." Everybody liked him. Various religious organizations throughout the State had extended invitations to him time and again to talk to them on the subject of crime and criminals and Sam never failed to preach tolerance and sympathy to his audiences. He said he could "catch more flies with molasses than with vinegar."

"I believe," he declared, "that we can do more with the criminal by treating him sympathetically than by resorting to harsh methods. I always remember that the purpose of the prison is reformation and I never resort to punishment until all other methods fail."

This was the substance of an address that he had delivered to a religious organization in a certain New England city. Josephine sent me the newspaper clipping containing Sam's remarks. I had written her telling her that the Warden was a degenerate and a fiend who delighted in torturing men. She didn't believe me.

"Mr. White," she wrote, "is very well thought of. Only last night my father [who was a very prominent man] and I were talking about him. Dad said he was one of the best wardens in the United States. He must be all right; otherwise he wouldn't have been in charge of the prison all these years."

Then I wrote her giving her a word picture of the water cure to which I had been subjected. I told her about Meyer, the shoe-shop boss. I told her about little Bennie Lowenthal and what they had been doing to him for two years. I told her about the lice and bedbugs and the revolting sanitary conditions. I woke her up! She replied that he certainly must be a degenerate if he did these things to "unfortunate men" and then went about the State preaching "tolerance and sympathy."

Josephine and the Governor's daughter were friends. They were born and raised in the same town. They were attending the same college. Her father and the Governer were friends. I was "in right" and it looked as though I might be able to get a pardon if I could go along a year or two without having any trouble with "Burly Sam."

But that was not possible. Nobody could get along with Sam. He was simply hell a mile. He was unhappy unless he was giving some convict the works. When I was able to return to the shop he began to intimidate me. Meyer helped him. Between the two of them they drove me to desperation. I organized a riot the purpose of which was to kill Sam and Meyer. I really meant to slaughter both of them, but I intended to do it in such a way that they couldn't pin the murder on my shoulders. I took two desperate fellows into my confidence, "Big Jim Reilly," a lifer, and "Little Black Face Tony," who was doing twenty-five years for manslaughter. Sam had razzle-dazzled these two cons until they were just about on the verge of insanity. They were not all there.

They should have been in the "nut factory," and the only reason why they hadn't been sent to the insane department was that Sam didn't want to lose the fifty-five cents a day that the contractors paid for their services.

"Big Jim" and Tony went around the shop organizing the convicts for the revolt. We intended to stage it around four in the afternoon just before we were locked up for the night. Meyer and the shoe-shop guard carried guns in their pockets. We planned to grab them and take the guns and then telephone to the office, asking the Warden to come over to the shoe shop. When Sam stepped into the shop we were going to grab him. When the cons surrounded Meyer and Sam, when the mêlée was at its height I intended to throw a few shots into the both of them, after which I was going to lead a charge to the main prison gate for liberty. I was in a terrible mental state in those days. I had reached the stage of the game where I didn't care whether I lived or died.

My mental condition was aggravated when the guard who used to take out and bring in the letters from Josephine was dismissed from the institution. I was cut off from all connection with the outside world. I was deprived of books, magazines and every humanizing influence. I was not even permitted to attend the Sunday services in the chapel.

Finally the day of the riot rolled around. It had been snowing. It was unusually dark, an ideal day for a break. I gave the signal to "Big Jim" and "Black Face Tony." Jim threw off the switch which sidetracked the power and stopped all the machines. The cons left their benches and then we dashed for Meyer and the shoe-shop guard. Three hundred and fifty convicts followed us over to the desk where Meyer and the guard were standing. Pandemonium reigned supreme. The cons were shouting and cursing and trying to slug the two officers. Big Jim and Tony held them back while I began to "frisk" Meyer and the guard for the guns. They didn't have guns! The holsters were there, but they were empty!

Meyer and the guard laughed at me. Instantaneously I had a feeling that there had been "a tip off," that some rat had squealed. This impression had hardly flitted across my mind

when the door opened and in walked Sam with fifteen or twenty guards armed to the teeth with Winchesters.

"Every damn one of you rascals git back to your machines," he yelled, "or we'll kill you where you stand, and you, Kelly," he pointed his finger at me, "come here, quick, quick as hell."

I didn't move. Sam came up to me. The twenty armed guards followed him.

"Take him over to the bull pen," he roared. "Some of you get Reilly and the wop."

They escorted "Big Jim" and "Black Face Tony" and me over to the bull pen. They gave us the "water cure," after which they tossed us into the dungeons for fifteen days on bread and water.

When we were released from the dungeons we learned that "Hoozier Slim," a lifer, one of the members of the shoe-shop gang, had tipped us off to the Warden, for which the rat was pardoned by the Governor.

I had been in the New England "madhouse" now about eleven months. I had spent about five of the eleven months in the dungeons. I had dropped from a hundred and seventy-five to a hundred and forty pounds. The dungeons and the water cure were slowly but surely undermining my health. I was a physical wreck! I hadn't read a book or a magazine and hadn't been permitted to write or receive a letter in three months. All the underground channels by which I had been able to communicate with Josephine had been plugged up. "Burly Sam" was on the verge of "breaking me." I saw at once that I couldn't stand up under the grind much longer. I concluded to act the part of the licked dog.

"If I keep on fighting this guy," I thought, "he'll kill me, sure as hell."

The prison doctor told Sam that I was in bad shape, that I was not able to work in the shoe shop and that he would have to give me a job in the open until I had regained my health. Sam didn't like the idea of taking me out of the shoe shop because it meant fifty-five cents a day out of his revenue. He protested that I was able to work in the shop, but when the doctor told him that I might kick the bucket he relented and sent me to the yard.

While I was working in the yard I got acquainted with the

Warden's daughter, Louise, a little six-year-old tot. She was a sweet kid, even if she did look like her hard-boiled papa.

"Are you Mister Kelly, the bank burglar?" she said to me on the occasion of our first chat.

I admitted that I was the gentleman and then I asked her how she learned my name.

"My papa told me," she replied. "He told me and my mamma that you was the baddest man in the prison. Are you?"

"Well, Louise," I said to her, "does papa always tell you and your mamma the truth?"

She said her father always told the truth.

"And," she went on, "he tells us that all little girls go to a bad place if they tell lies. My papa always tells the truth."

I learned many things about the other side of "Burly Sam's" character from his little daughter. I learned that he always got on his knees at night and said his prayers with his children. I learned that he was what the world calls a good father and a good husband. I tried to reconcile the good father and the good husband with the beast in the man-breaker.

"How in the hell," I thought, "can he be so good and tender with his own flesh and blood and yet be so cruel to these unlucky men? How can he get on his knees at night and pray to his God and then torture convicts?"

I couldn't get him at all. He was a problem to me. I never got him until I snatched little Louise out of the jaws of death one afternoon in the big prison yard. She and her brother Willie, a twelve-year-old youngster, were playing ball in the center of the yard when the switch engine entered to take out and place three or four cars on the sidings near the various shops. I was at work washing windows in the chapel. Every time the engine entered the prison I had my eyes open; I was always on the alert, looking for an opportunity to make a get-away. I did very little work when the train came in the prison. On this particular day I was unusually sharp. As a matter of fact I had decided to take a chance. I stepped out of the chapel and moved over to the train, intending to sneak into one of the empty cars. Suddenly I heard a scream. It galvanized me into immediate attention. Willie was screaming:

"Louise, Louise, look out for the train!"

The engine was switching a car. It came thundering down the track. Louise had gone after the ball. She had stumbled on the track just as the switcher hurled a car into the siding. I saw her stretched out on the tracks and at that moment I heard another roar, the roar of "Burly Sam," who had just come out of the office. I dived head first for the kid and yanked her off the tracks just as the empty car breezed by me.

"God Almighty!" gasped Sam, as he picked up his daughter and hugged and kissed her.

I walked over to the chapel.

"Kelly," he called me, "come here, Kelly." His voice was soft and appealing.

I turned and went back to where he was standing with Louise. His eyes were filled with tears. He patted me on the back. He started to speak to me. The tears were now fairly streaming down his big, fat, cruel face.

"That was fine of you, Kelly," he sobbed. "I won't forget that, Kelly; you saved my kid."

"Oh, that's all right, Warden." I turned and went back to the chapel to wash the windows.

"Why in the hell didn't y' let the car cut 'er up, Kelly," one of the cons said to me. "It would have been just what that big son of a bitch deserves. If I had been in your place I'd let the train cut 'er up."

Several minutes later "Burly Sam's" wife came over to the chapel.

She was as sweet as her husband was cruel. She thanked me for saving Louise. She wanted to know if she could do anything for me.

"Nothing at all," I told her.

"It was wonderful of you," she sobbed.

"No," I replied. "I'm glad that I had the chance to save your daughter. It may convince your husband that men with stripes on them are not all beasts as he thinks they are. The only thing you can do for me is to ask your husband to treat us a little more humanely than he has in the past."

The first token of Sam's appreciation came in the form of a good dinner from the officers' kitchen. There was a card on the tray:

"With the compliments of the Warden."

It was the first good meal that I had eaten in a year. I relished it!

That night about nine o'clock, after the lights had been extinguished, a guard came tiptoeing down the corridor. He stopped at my cell and rattled a key on the door.

"Hey, Kelly," he whispered, "git up. The Warden wants y'."

I dressed and went to Sam's office with the guard. The big fellow was sitting at his desk puffing on a cigar.

"Sit down, Jack,"—it was the first time he had ever addressed me by my first name,—"and have a cigar."

I lighted the cigar.

Then he began to talk about his daughter, Louise, and what I had done. I listened. I didn't speak. He confessed that he had given me "a dirty deal" because he had taken a dislike to me and now he was ashamed of himself for having rawhided me.

"I always figured you a no-good crook," he said, "and I took a delight in giving you hell. I took a delight in giving all the boys hell, but now, Jack,"—he was looking me bang in the eyes,—"I realize that I was wrong and I'm sorry. I'm going to treat the boys different. I'm going to treat 'em like men. I want to help you. I'll do anything that I can for you. I——"

"Give me my letters," I interrupted him. "I want to read my girl's letters. Where are they?"

He smiled, opened one of the drawers in his desk and pulled out a package of six letters from Josephine. I read them at once.

"You're in love with that girl, ain't you?" He looked at me and laughed.

"Bugs about her," I grunted, as I read my sweetheart's letters that had been accumulating in his desk for three months.

When I finished reading Josephine's love notes, Sam went on with his talk about being sorry for this, that and the other thing. He raved about the changes that he was going to make in the prison. He was going to improve the food, clean up the cells, abolish the water cure, start a school, get new

books in the library, give the convicts more privileges.

"The bunk," I thought as he enumerated all the things he was going to do. "He'll be knocking hell out of some poor con just as soon as he forgets that a poor con saved his daughter's life."

I was not at all enthused. I still hated his guts. I couldn't warm up to him. He restored all my privileges, but that didn't win me.

But he was really sincere. The next morning he called all the prisoners to the chapel and delivered a speech. He apologized for being so rough with them. He organized a welfare league. He improved the food. He did everything he promised. He turned out to be a regular human being. Then I gave him my hand one day. At last I was able to reconcile the brute in him with his getting on his knees at night with his children. He was brutal because he was stupid, unimaginative. When he saw that convicts were simply good men gone wrong, he "switched" his creed. And when he "switched" his creed and substituted humane methods for barbaric ones the production of the shops jumped seventy-five per cent within thirty days. The men worked harder than ever and he had much less trouble.

CHAPTER XIV

THE "TANNHÄUSER" OVERTURE

THERE'S a lot of wisdom in the old saying: "Monkey sees, monkey does." I never realized how much of the monkey there was in the average human being until "Burly Sam" reformed. Everybody connected with the prison management changed when Sam changed. Even the prison Chaplain saw the error of his ways and gradually developed into a really interesting human being. Instead of coming into the chapel every Sunday and delivering a dry, stereotyped talk on the necessity of humility and suffering and obedience, he got down to earth, nearer his Master, and preached about things in which we were interested, men, life, liberty, human relationship and our individual problems. The Chaplain was an interesting man when he reformed. He and I became good friends. He volunteered to help me obtain my liberty. He brought me books, spent an hour or two chatting with me once a week and when I told him that I was in love "with a certain young lady" and that I intended to reform, marry and settle down to a life on the straight and narrow, he patted me on the back and uttered a sincere: "God bless you, my boy."

And I was determined to do these things. I was madly in love with Josephine. My mind took a religious twist. I began to pray for liberty. One night the guard saw me on my knees. I didn't know that he saw me praying. He told "Burly Sam," who in turn told the Chaplain, whereupon the Chaplain became interested in me more than ever. I couldn't understand why he was so concerned about me until it leaked out that the guard had seen me on my knees. Now the religious impulse that seized me was not a deep-rooted one. As a matter of fact I'm not so sure that it was a religious impulse. I think I just prayed for liberty simply because I wanted to get out and see Josephine. I never prayed except when I thought of liberty and Josephine. But the Chaplain was con-

vinced that I had got religion; therefore he wanted me to tell all the rest of the cons that I "had been saved by the blood of the Lamb." He said that I should get up in the chapel and profess my love for the Lord. I hesitated about doing that. I was not so sure that I loved the Lord. I was sure that I *would* love him if he gave me my liberty. The Chaplain kept after me. Here is where my imagination began to function.

"Fine business," I thought, "I'll do what the Chaplain says. I'll turn psalm-singer. I'll shout halleluiah. I'll get on my knees. I'll tell those lowbrowed, hard-boiled law breakers to come to God. I'll win the Chaplain and then he'll help me to get a pardon."

Within a week I was the talk of the prison. The news that I had got religion was circulated all over the State. The press had already broadcasted an account of how I had rescued "Burly Sam's" daughter from death and now on top of that heroic stunt was the story of my reformation. I was getting the breaks. Things were coming my way. I was an object of curiosity whenever visitors went through the big prison. The keepers pointed me out as "the reformed bank burglar."

A peculiar mental reaction set in along about this time. I had professed religion simply because I wanted to get out, but now I felt myself growing sincerely religious. I read the Bible. It fascinated me. I had never read such a tremendously interesting book. I believed everything it contained, the story of the crucifixion, the Virgin Birth, the creation of the world in six days and the flood.

I was lying on my cot one night after the lights had been turned out. I was thinking of the new life. I had a feeling of contentment and ease. Suddenly I heard the village band playing in the square. They were playing something that I had never heard before and that something, whatever it was, was gradually getting me. The music saddened me. I became reminiscent. I thought of my mother, my father, sisters and brothers. It seemed to me that within a few seconds my entire life had flitted across the screen of my imagination. I grew more and more despondent as the band played until at last I was in a convulsion of grief, sobbing and crying like a kid.

"God!" I said to myself. "What was that thing they were playing?"

I called the night guard up to my cell door and asked him if he would try to get me the name of the piece.

"It was a wonderful thing," I said to him, "and I'll be grateful to you if you get me the name of it."

The next day he told me that it was the overture from the opera of "Tannhäuser." The impression went abroad that I was a lover of music, when as a matter of fact I didn't know a thing about music. But I liked that "Tannhäuser" overture so much that I asked the band to play it every Wednesday night when the concert was given in the square and every time I heard it, it tore me to pieces; I alternately laughed and sobbed. There was something sublime in it. I tried to analyze my reactions. I couldn't do it. I went around from one Wednesday to the other like a man in a daze. I sidetracked the Bible for that "Tannhäuser" overture. I sidetracked Josephine for it.

The natives were interested in me because I was interested in "good music." I kidded them that I had been a lover of the opera. I recalled all the things that "Toronto Billy" had told me about the opera. I aped Billy. I repeated the remarks that he had handed out to me and though I had heard only two operas in my life, "Rigoletto" and "Carmen," neither of which I understood, I managed to leave the impression with the natives that I loved and understood music. Of course the natives didn't know any more about opera than I did, otherwise I couldn't have bulled them the way I did.

All these things, I learned later on, got to the ears of the Governor. I decided to have a chat with the Governor the next time he visited the prison. I had a hunch that I could talk him out of a pardon. "Burly Sam" and the Chaplain said they would help me.

I planned my appeal and approach for executive clemency, and when the Governor arrived at the prison on his annual inspection tour I was all set for him. "Burly Sam" hailed me into the office and introduced me. The Chaplain was there. I asked the Governor to commute my sentence.

"I want a chance to reform," I said to him. "I'm all through with the underworld, Governor. I want to get out. I'm in love with a fine girl. Give me a chance and I won't abuse your faith in me."

He looked at me and laughed and then he said:

"Do you think you're entitled to a pardon?"

"No," I replied, "I don't. If I had what is coming to me I should die in prison and while I'm innocent of this crime for which I am serving time here, I have committed hundreds of crimes for which I have never been convicted or even arrested."

"What assurance have I," he went on, "that you won't go back to the underworld if I should commute your sentence?"

"The fact that I have been here as long as I have," I looked him in the eyes.

He didn't get me.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean," I said, "that I would have left this place long ago if I hadn't decided to reform."

The intimation that I could have beat the prison amused him. There was an expression of doubt on his face.

"Now you're just blowing, Mr. Kelly."

"No, Your Excellency," I insisted, "I'm not blowing. I can get away from this place any time I feel like going."

"What about that, Sam?" He turned to the Warden.

Sam said the prison had never been beaten during the twenty-five years that he had been managing it. The Governor was now certain that I was blowing. I proceeded to convince him that I wasn't blowing.

I told him I was sincere when I said that I intended to reform if he commuted my sentence; and that if he did not, I would convince him that I could get away, by making my escape and then journeying to the capital of the State.

"No, no, no, no," he hastened to declare, "nothing like that; we couldn't have that for a minute."

He switched the conversation. He inquired about my parents, my home, how long I had been a bank burglar, how I became a bank burglar, how a bank was burglarized and as to whether I had ever killed anybody. I answered all his questions frankly. I believed that I had made a good impression with him. But he didn't commute my sentence. When he left the prison he told me that he would consider my application. I was disappointed. "Burly Sam" and the Chaplain told me that they were sure he would do something for me.

"Don't get discouraged," the Chaplain said; "the Governor liked you and I'm sure he'll do something for you."

I took up the Bible again. I prayed harder than ever. Every Sunday I got up in the chapel and talked to the cons about Heaven, Hell and Purgatory; I was a psalm-singer extraordinary. There was no sham about the religious attitude now. I was sincere, or I thought I was. I wasn't pretending now. I believed! I was saved!

Then the desire to write took hold of me. I decided to write a book on my life. The fact that I couldn't talk or write a dozen words of correct English and that writing a book was a task that called for ability of a sort never entered my mind. I just decided to write the book and then I had visions of publishers fighting with each other for the privilege of producing the book. So I began what I called an autobiographical novel!

God Almighty how I wrote! I wrote night and day for six months. Newspaper editors sent special writers to see me. I showed them what I had written. They must have reported to their editors that the stuff was terrible and after a time I, too, got a hunch that it was terrible!

Of course I didn't realize that I was slowly but surely evolving into a better type of human being. I can see it now, but I couldn't see it then. I was becoming intellectually curious. That, I am sure, was at the bottom of the desire to write a book. On the other hand there was the streak of vanity in me. I reveled in the thought of becoming an author. It gave me a feeling of superiority. I could actually feel myself growing.

Whenever I came across a word in a book or a magazine that I didn't understand, I grabbed the dictionary and looked up the definition. I got tremendously interested in words and their meanings. I memorized phrases and verse after verse of Swinburne and Oscar Wilde and then I would pass them off, parrotlike, to "Burly Sam," the Chaplain and the ladies who taught the Sunday School classes in the chapel. I had a flair for detective and crook yarns and the third-rate love stories of Laura Jean Libbey and Bertha Clay. I hadn't yet cultivated a taste for good literature outside of Wilde and Swinburne; I was a nut on poetry!

Three months had passed since my chat with the Governor, during which time I had written him four or five letters pleading for a commutation of my sentence or a parole. His Excellency made no response to any of my appeals, whereupon I decided to resort to a little strategy for the purpose of making him turn me loose.

I sent a letter to Josephine by the way of the underground prison route. I had already advised her of my talk with the Governor. She and the Governor's eldest daughter were very good friends. I wrote "Jo," telling her that I had a feeling that the Governor was not going to do anything for me, but that if she would follow my suggestion carefully he would probably fall for the idea that I had framed up. In substance the frame-up was this:

She was to go to the Capitol and visit the Governor. Then she was to propose to the Governor's daughter that they visit the State Prison. Of course neither the Governor nor any member of his family, nor any of the officials at the prison knew that Josephine was my sweetheart. I had been corresponding with her under an assumed name.

"When you come to the prison," I wrote her, "they will point me out to you and the Governor's daughter. They never fail to point me out to visitors. When I'm pointed out you immediately ask whoever does the pointing to introduce me. The purpose of this is to get the Governor's daughter interested. The Warden and the Chaplain and all the rest of the prison officials will speak well of me. Everybody here likes me since I saved the life of the Warden's daughter and since everybody believes that I have 'got religion.' After I have been introduced to you and the Governor's daughter, I will do my stuff and then after I leave you, why, you can go to work on the Governor's daughter."

A month after this letter had gone out Josephine and the Governor's daughter visited the prison. I was trimming trees in the prison yard when "Burly Sam" came out of the administration building with them. I saw them before they saw me. I had memorized a beautiful speech which I intended to deliver. I had been working on it for two months, but when I got a flash at Josephine, the first time I had seen her in two years, I was tongue-tied. My bean went dead on me. I forgot

all about the beautiful speech. Now I didn't want to talk with her. A sense of shame swept over me. My head was shaved and I was dressed in a terrible looking rig. I was all red up and down one side and all black up and down the other while I wore a little blood red cap on the top of my head. I certainly was one hell of a looking Romeo!

"Jack, hey, Jack," I heard "Burly Sam" calling me.

He and the girls were coming to me. I advanced to meet them. I was humiliated beyond expression.

Sam introduced me. I was afraid to look at Josephine lest I betray myself. Sam began to buzz the girls about me, telling them what a great fellow I was, how I saved his daughter's life, what good friends he and I were, how everybody in the prison liked me, how smart I was, how trustworthy, and so on.

The Governor's daughter was a charmingly artificial thing. How she could talk! She asked me more questions about crooks, the underworld, how banks were robbed, how many I had robbed, how much money I had got, what I did with the money, how many girls I had loved than all the third-degreeing dicks in the world have ever asked me. But she was real nice. I worked on her to beat the band. I talked about my life as a kid in the tenements, and told her that if her father gave me my liberty I would make good. I told her I was in love with a nice girl. Josephine blushed crimson when I said that. The Governor's daughter wanted to know all about my love affair, who the girl was, where she lived and whether she knew I was a bank burglar. I lied consistently.

"Burly Sam" had to go back to the office. He left me with the girls. I had regained my composure now. I began to spiel about music and poetry and the great things I expected to accomplish if her father commuted my sentence. I talked with them two hours, escorted them all over the big prison and when we parted Edna, His Excellency's daughter, grabbed my hand and said:

"I'm certainly going to make papa give you a chance, Mr. Kelly. I won't let him rest until he pardons you."

Ten days after this chat His Excellency came to the prison again. He sent for me.

"Well, Kelly," he said, "I've decided to experiment with you. I'm going to parole you and I hope you make good. If

you should fail to walk the path of rectitude, if you are even seen in the company of criminals, you will be returned to prison to complete your term. Here's your parole." He handed me the paper. "Now let's see what you can do."

"Burly Sam" and the Chaplain were grinning from ear to ear.

"Jack'll make good, Governor," Sam cut in. "Have no fear of that; he'll make good, won't y', Jack?"

"I certainly will," I stammered between sobs of joy. "I'll make good, Governor, I'll make good all right, all right."

"If you continue to place your trust in God," the little bald-headed Chaplain drawled. "One never goes very far in this life if one fails to look to God for support and consolation and strength."

"I shall never fail to ask God to help me," I responded. "God's been good to me."

Then a great idea took hold of the Chaplain.

"John," he said—he never called me Jack—"if you're so disposed, you can be a great power for good in the world and I believe that you want to do good work, don't you, John?"

I assured him that I did.

"Then," he went on, "you can start right here in this prison. Before you leave town I want you to deliver a talk to the boys and to my congregation. I want you to tell them what God has done for you."

I consented to do what the Chaplain suggested. The Governor had paroled me on a Friday. I remained in town until Sunday. Sunday morning I went back to the prison in the dress of a citizen of the world and delivered a talk on my redemption to the cons.

The old-timers looked at me and grinned. They thought I was a faker, shamming, pretending, but I wasn't. In a way, I was sincere. I thought I was altogether sincere, but now I know that I wasn't. I have always been more or less of an emotional Irishman, I have always been more or less of an actor. In those days I was always able to work myself up into such a pitch of emotional fervor that I could make myself believe that white was black or that I was destined to play an important part in the drama of life. And when men like

"Burly Sam" and the little Chaplain egged me on and told me that I was an unusual person, I believed them. I didn't know the difference between dummies and real, substantial human beings. I was a dummy; therefore I believed what other dummies told me.

Sunday evening I went to the Chaplain's church to tell the natives all about my redemption. I talked to them for two hours. I rehearsed in detail the story of my life and how I came, step by step, to the feet of the Master, where I was redeemed. The old ladies cried and uttered heart-felt halleluiah's, Amen's and God-be-with-you's. The young men and women of the congregation were not so deeply impressed, I thought. They looked at me and listened to me attentively, but they didn't enthuse like the old folk. The Chaplain suggested the singing of the Doxology when I had finished my talk. Then he offered what I considered a first-rate suggestion.

"This boy," he said, "comes out into the world to rehabilitate himself and while he's rich in the grace of God he is poor in the material things of life. He's penniless and I propose that we take up a collection for him to tide him over until he's able to obtain employment."

The collection amounted to three hundred and fifty dollars.

"Three hundred and fifty dollars," the little bald-headed preacher grunted when he finished counting the money. "My, oh, my."

I got the impression that the amount staggered him. He stood there fingering the money for a moment or two. Presently he stepped out of the pulpit and called two of the deacons:

"Brother Howard and Brother Williams," he said, "I would like to have a word with you."

I had a hunch that something was wrong. He and the two deacons chatted for about five minutes, after which the Chaplain mounted the pulpit again.

"Friends," he began, "I had no idea that you were going to contribute so generously. Brothers Howard and Williams and I have discussed the matter of this collection quite seriously. We are of the opinion that this is entirely too much money to give Mr. Kelly. We think a hundred dollars is sufficient to defray his expenses until he obtains employment. The big cities offer too many temptations to the young man with a

pocket full of money. We have decided to give Mr. Kelly one hundred dollars, holding the balance in reserve. If he doesn't succeed in obtaining employment reasonably soon, why, he can write me and I will send him another hundred. This decision is prompted solely by our interest in Mr. Kelly's welfare and I'm sure he will understand."

I assured his Reverence that I understood, though I couldn't dope it out how he figured three hundred and fifty dollars too much money for me, a man who had handled hundreds of thousands. However, I thanked the Chaplain and his congregation, pocketed the hundred and smiled knowingly.

"I wonder," I thought, "if he's going South with the rest of that dough."

CHAPTER XV

FIGHTING TO GO STRAIGHT

WHAT a naïve young man I was when I left the New England prison and started out to rehabilitate myself! I enjoy a hearty laugh now when I think of the absurd ideas I entertained about the world and men and women. One of the silly ideas that lingered in my mind was that the world was populated with good and bad people. I thought all the bad people were in the underworld and that all the good ones were on the so-called straight and narrow. When I quit the crime business I thought I was going into another world, a world in which the golden rule predominated and in which the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God reigned triumphantly! I thought my rehabilitation was going to be a cakewalk, that all I would have to do would be to tell people that I wanted a chance and that they forthwith would give me the chance, pat me on the back and say go to it, brother, and God be with you!

This idealism was dynamited sky high when I obtained my first job. I wanted to make my start in Boston, but Josephine persuaded me to begin in the town where she lived.

"Small town people," she said, "are more hospitable, more generous than city people. Start in the community that knows all about your past history."

She wanted me near her, she said; she would be much happier. She thought I might get into bad company if I went to the big cities. She pleaded with me to remain in the one-horse burg, so I remained.

The job to which I have referred was obtained by misrepresentation. That's where I made the first mistake. It was in a shoe factory. Josephine's father was a big stockholder in the shoe factory. She told her father that Edna, the Governor's daughter, was interested in me, that she, Josephine, had met me through the Governor's daughter and that Edna had asked

her to speak to him regarding a position when I was paroled from the prison. She did not tell her father that she and I were in love with each other. Of course I didn't expect her to tell him that. Papa would have probably spanked her if she, a member of a family with pedigree as long as your right arm, had confessed her love for a crook. I had sense enough to realize that the honor and tradition of an old family had to be preserved. But I didn't have sense enough to realize that an ex-bank burglar stood about as much chance to break into the old family as the proverbial snowball in the proverbial Hell. I really thought I would be able to break into it after I had established myself. And Josephine thought the same.

"Ma and Pa," she said, "are broad and liberal. You make a great name for yourself, work hard, save your money, study and I'll bet that we'll be able to win over Pa and Ma when we get ready to marry."

So I began to build the "great name." Josephine's father took an interest in me. He introduced me to the head of the factory. He told the factory officials my history from A to Z. He had my permission to do so. I thought it best to start that way for the very good reason that I knew that it would leak out anyway. I have learned that a man can never get away from his history, particularly a bad history.

The factory manager was a likable sort. I told him that I was ambitious to succeed in a big way, that I wanted to learn the business from the ground up, so he put me in the tannery, where I would learn how the hides were tanned.

It was a tough job and a dirty one and a smelly one. I worked ten hours a day for fifteen dollars a week. I had engaged a little two-by-four room for which I paid three dollars a week. It cost me five dollars a week for a meal ticket of twenty-one meals. I banked five dollars every week. I was looking forward to the day when "Jo" and I would marry and I wanted to have a bank roll planted.

The natives viewed me as a sort of curiosity and the lazy yaps in the tannery took a great dislike to me when I made an effort to do more work than they. I had an idea that I could work myself into a big job. Of course if I had had an ounce of brains I wouldn't have harbored such a bughouse idea. I would have known that a man never works himself into any-

thing, but that a man can think himself into most anything in life. I didn't know, so I worked like hell and did very little thinking and at the end of six months I was still receiving the fifteen per for the ten hours per day.

Still I wasn't discouraged. The work didn't hurt me. The thing that hurt me was the attitude of the horny-handed, feather-brained natives. They gave me a wide berth. They wouldn't associate with me. They had labeled me "a bad character." Mammas and papas advised their daughters to steer clear of me and the daughters steered clear.

But I didn't mind the corn-fed dames. I wasn't interested in them. I was with Josephine nearly every other night in the week. She and I would meet in some secluded spot and away we would ramble in her car to the country, where we would love and talk love and the future.

Eventually I won a promotion. The manager made me a gang boss. I had charge of twelve men in the tannery. The job carried a five dollar advance in salary and more hell than any boss in this man's world ever endured. First of all, the yaps objected to working under the direction of an ex-crook. They didn't openly circulate their objections, but they did it in other ways. They didn't obey my orders. They began to shoot at the clock. They organized to defeat me so that one of their own kind could get the job. Here is where I made mistake number two. Instead of trying to win them, instead of trying to bull them along I began to fight them. About once a week for a month I had to put the slug on one of them.

The ringleader of the plot to make me fail as a gang boss was the son of a policeman in the town, Joe Lorenz. Young Lorenz had an idea that he could lick me. He was much bigger than I and he was something of a bully. I decided that the only way that I could get along with him was by giving him a good trimming, which I did one evening after the factory closed. I invited him in one of the warehouses where we stored hides and when I got him in I locked the door and gave him hell; I licked him.

This quite naturally made his father, the cop, sore, so the cop began to talk about me. He said that a crook never reformed.

"Once a crook always a crook," the big copper declared.

"Y' got to watch them fellers and who knows that this feller ain't doing something on the side. We've had a few robberies since he landed in town."

Here is where I made mistake number three. Instead of ignoring the cop's cracks I resented them. I took him to task personally. I met him on the main street one night and told him that I had heard some of the things he had said about me.

"I always speak my feelings," he said. "If y' don't like it, y' know what y' can do."

I tied up with him right then and there. He tried to give me a slugging with his night stick, but I got it away from him. I was giving him a fine trimming when a gang of natives came to his assistance and escorted me to the calaboose.

My clash with the law didn't boost my stock with the natives. The town blabber ran a story around the affair. They said I was a rowdy. They reviewed my career as a gang boss at the tannery, pointing out that I had had nine fights in three months and that I would probably fit to a better advantage as a bouncer in a saloon than a handler of men. The factory manager and Josephine's father took me to task for fighting with the cop.

"We pay you to work and not to fight," they told me.

They intimated that a dismissal would be forthcoming if I got mixed up in any more brawls. Then they told me that my parole would be revoked if I didn't watch my step and attend to business. I promised to do better when they got to the Justice of the Peace and had the charge of assault and battery on an officer dismissed.

And in order to do better I had to act the baby. I had to endure the taunts of the natives and the taunts of the men who were working under my direction. I felt myself slipping. I had a hunch that it was only a matter of time until the ambition to go up would die a natural death. I communicated my feelings to Josephine. She tried to encourage me. I wanted to get out of the town. I wanted to go to Boston or some other big city and make a start. She protested, so I stayed to stand the gaff.

Along about this time the Governor's daughter, Edna, came to town. She told me and Josephine that the Governor had heard of my altercation with the policeman and that the chief

of police had written to him suggesting that it might be a good idea to revoke my parole. Right away I wanted to go gunning for the chief, but I managed to stifle my feelings and went to work harder than ever.

I was terribly unhappy and the impression that all the good people were living along the straight and narrow and all the bad ones were in the underworld was not so strong as it was the day I left prison to establish myself as a member of Society. I saw at once that my come-back was not going to be a cakewalk, but rather a battle and I had a lingering suspicion that I wasn't equipped for the battle. I had absolutely no idea at this time what sort of equipment would be necessary in order to succeed. I just felt that I wasn't there, that I lacked something and that I was doomed to take a Brodie sooner or later.

Here is where I went back to religion again. I hadn't given it a thought since the night that I talked to the Chaplain's congregation in the prison town. I decided that I couldn't get on without the help of God. I decided that I had had so much trouble primarily because I had deserted God. I was sure of that. I began to pray. I went to church. I went to confession. I received communion.

Old Father Joe knew my history. He told me that I had to cultivate humility, that I had to do good for evil, smile when the going was hard and put my trust on God. Now I was happy again. Once again I was living in a new world!

Whenever one of the tannery gang got rough or impudent with me I smiled. I recalled Father Joe's advice:

"A soft answer turneth away wrath."

I tried to talk the boys into doing what I told them to do, but the more I talked, the more I tried to act the good fellow, the more impossible they became. They didn't respond to the "Brother, won't you please—" attitude. No, those yaps got a hunch that they had me on the hip, that I was licked.

Day by day I was losing faith in the old phrase that, "a soft answer turneth away wrath." I found it hard to do good for evil and to smile when the going was hard. When I felt myself drifting away from the religious frame of mind again, I prayed harder than ever. I went to Father Joe every night for consolation.

I came clean with Father Joe. I told him about my relationship with Josephine. He was astonished.

"Have you met Mr. White?" he asked me.

I had heard of Mr. White, but I didn't know him. Mr. White was the son of the town's leading banker, head of the bank in which I deposited a few dollars every week. I told Father Joe that I knew him by sight and that I had been introduced to his father, but that I had never been introduced to the son. Father Joe told me that young White was engaged to Josephine, or had been engaged to her. This information staggered me. Josephine had confessed her love for me and now I recalled having seen her with him many, many times.

I asked Josephine about young White and why she hadn't told me that she and White were engaged. She laughed.

"Don't be silly," she said, "he is absolutely nothing to me; I love you."

That was good enough for me. I was convinced that White didn't have a chance. She admitted that she liked George White before she met me.

"But," she said, "I never seriously entertained the idea of marrying him."

Father Joe didn't approve of my relationship with Josephine. He said nothing good could ever come out of it.

"You should try to get a girl of your own faith, a girl nearer your own social scale. She's all right, but she's a rich man's daughter and I don't think, to be frank with you, that you'll ever be able to give her the things that she has been used to having."

In a word, Father Joe tried to break up my affair with Josephine, but God himself couldn't have done that! I disregarded his advice. Josephine was my all in all and life without her wouldn't have been worth a damn!

During the year and a half that I was trying to rehabilitate myself I had broken off all my old underworld connections. Members of the gang had written me letters to the prison and these letters were forwarded to me at the tannery. I never answered any of them. I was through with the boys. I didn't want to see or hear from any of them.

But one day "Toronto Billy" came to see me. He was still

the same prosperous-looking Billy. He kidded me about "trying to square it."

"Wake up, Jack, wake up. You're only wasting your time," he said.

Only a few years back he had raved to me about the futility of grifting for a living, now he was trying to make me believe that working for a living was a sucker's racket. I jogged his memory.

"Why the big change?"

"I'm wiser than I was then," he replied, "I am now convinced that a grifter hasn't got a chance to live on the level. The yaps won't stand for it."

My mind took a reminiscent twist. I began to think of what a hell of a tough time I had had trying to make good. I thought Billy was right. I was sure that I hadn't a chance to make good in a big way. I had been working a year and a half and I was still earning about twenty-two dollars a week with no prospects of any bigger returns. Billy pleaded with me to come back to the underworld.

"Here's a fine mark right in this burg," he went on, "good for at least twenty gran. Let's knock it off and grab a boat for the other side. Come on!"

The mark to which he referred was old man White's bank.

"Twenty gran," I mused; "more dough than I'll ever earn in that lousy tannery."

The temptation was great. I felt myself tobogganing toward the Pit again. I thought of Josephine and Father Joe's advice. I tried to pray away the temptation. It couldn't be prayed away. The desire for the old life was stronger than prayers. I couldn't sidetrack the desire to go back to the crime trails. The fascination for the old life was taking hold of me slowly but surely. I wanted to knock off just one more jug. I wanted to see the blue-white flash of an explosion again. I wanted to hear the roar of an explosion as it whipped off the door of a vault or the sheeting of an automatic time-locking pete. I wanted to get the thrill of a gun fight with a gang of natives or a gang of cops. But always and ever Josephine loomed up in the picture. I could get away from the prayers, but I couldn't ditch her.

I talked with "Toronto Billy" about her. I told him that I was mad about her.

"Now, don't be a sap," he said. "If that broad loves you, she'll love you right or wrong and it doesn't make any difference whether you're a square-shooter or a grifter. Tell her you're sick of this sucker racket of working for a living, that you're going back to the grift and I'll bet a million that she'll hike out with you."

I hesitated about telling Josephine that I was sick of the straight and narrow. One day I would decide to tell her that I was through, while on the next I would decide that I wasn't through. I was having a hell of a battle with myself. She was all that stood between me and the jump over the line.

Billy wanted to meet her, so I organized a party of four for a jaunt to a summer resort some twenty-five or thirty miles away where we could dance and drink and swim. Edna came along. I told "Jo" and Edna that Billy was an old pal. He was always a dapper, immaculate guy, always dressed in the height of fashion, a ladies' man from head to foot.

The woman in "Jo" began to work. She sensed something wrong. She objected to my associating with Billy.

"If you're going to have your old friends around you, you'll never make good," she said to me. "I hope he hasn't been trying to persuade you to rob banks again; has he?"

I denied that he had suggested such a thing.

"But," I retorted, "suppose I should decide to take just one more chance, what would you do?"

"What would I do?" she blushed crimson and glared at me. "Well," she hesitated, "that would be the end. I would never want to see you again even if it broke my heart."

I assured her that I had no intention of going back to the underworld and that Billy had not made any overtures to me.

"That's not the truth," she snapped. "I can tell by the way you talk that he has suggested it to you and that you have been entertaining the suggestion. Don't lie to me."

Then I admitted that I had lied to her, whereupon she made me promise that I wouldn't see Billy again.

I told Billy what she said. He ridiculed the idea.

"I'm through," I declared, "through for all time. Not a

chance of your talking me into going back to the old life; I'm through."

Billy didn't bother me after I told him that I was through with the old life. I never saw or heard from him again that summer. He must have circulated throughout the underworld the information that I was through, because the gang ceased writing to me.

For a time I got an awful kick out of resisting the temptation to go back. Josephine told me that it was "a great personal victory," that it showed that I had "a lot of character," and that "I would surely triumph if I continued to work hard and study hard." I thought she was right so I worked like hell and read like hell. But I wasn't reading the sort of books that would have given me information. I devoured poetry and love stories and books on business organization. I didn't know how to read or what to read in those days. I was still stumbling along in the dark.

After I had spent nearly two years in the tannery, I was promoted. I was assigned to the cutting department. I got a three dollar salary increase with the promotion, making my weekly income twenty-five per week.

During those two years I had never been seen with Josephine in a public place and nobody, I thought, knew of our affair. I had never been in her home, had never met any of her friends. If we met in public it had to be in some other town and when we met in the burg where we lived it was always after dark, under cover, out on some road in her car. I tired of this under-cover business. I wanted to marry her. A hundred times I talked marriage and a hundred times she refused to consider the subject until I had "made good."

The hunch that she might never marry me possessed me night and day, but I was willing to gamble with her. She was worth it. I could wait until I had "made good." I was determined to "make good." Failure never entered my mind. I prayed to God for support!

I began to get the breaks. I worked myself out of the cutting department into the lasting department. I mastered the details of both departments. I was the first man in the factory in the morning and the last one to leave at night. I received another increase in salary. I was earning thirty-five

a week now. I moved into better quarters. I rented a little two-room flat over a store on the main stem. Now Josephine could visit me on the cold winter's nights. We could talk and plan our future. I was more optimistic than ever. Success seemed certain. One night her parents went to Boston to attend the opera. She was able to remain a little later than she usually did. Her parents wouldn't return until two o'clock. Along about one-thirty we left the apartment. I rode home with her, intending to walk back to my flat.

I got out of her car about two blocks from her home. I heard some shooting.

"What's that?" she exclaimed nervously.

"Somebody shooting," I said. "Sounds like it's uptown."

We stood there for a moment, listening.

"A gang of drunks," I said. "Some of those roughnecks from the factory whooping it up."

I left her and started for my apartment and as I rambled along I was wondering what the shooting was about and who was doing it. I headed toward the main street, intending to satisfy my curiosity. Suddenly the shooting discontinued and then the alarm bell in town hall began to ring madly. That bell only rang in emergencies, only when there were fires or burglaries. The natives jumped out of bed and hastened to the streets when they heard the town hall bell ringing. I knew that it wasn't a fire. The shooting convinced me it wasn't a fire.

"A burglary, sure as hell," I thought.

My first thought was to get to my apartment without being seen. I knew enough about the small-town native's mind to realize that if I was seen I would be a target for their suspicions. I hurried away from the main street. I ducked down the back streets. The bell was still ringing like mad. Windows were going up. Heads were popping out of the windows right and left and conversations were being carried on from house to house.

"Burglars." I heard the expression time and again as I hurried along the streets.

I lowered my head when I passed anybody. I didn't want anybody to see me and nobody did see me until I got within a block or two of my apartment, right in front of a dance hall.

A crowd of young men and girls were streaming out of the dance hall. Some of them were employed in the factory, and knew me. Some of them saw me and spoke as I passed. I dashed into my apartment, but before I had unlocked the door the man upstairs shouted:

"Hey, Mr. Kelly, what's up?"

"Fire, I guess," I replied, though I knew that it wasn't a fire.

I learned the next morning that an attempt had been made to rob the bank, old man White's bank, the father of George White, the fellow who was interested in Josephine.

"They'll be thinking that I know something about the attempt to plunder the jug," I thought.

American Banker's Association detectives were on the scene. They obtained finger prints from the bank door and windows. These prints were the prints of "Toronto Billy," they said. Then the dicks circulated the story that "Toronto Billy" and I were pals, or had been pals in the old days, whereupon the local chief of police sent for me.

The news spread like wildfire that the chief had sent for me and the natives immediately circulated the report that I probably had had a hand in the attempt to burglarize the bank.

"Once a crook always a crook," they said. "Them fellers never reforms."

The chief asked me if I knew Billy. I told him I did. He asked me where I was on the night of the attempted burglary. I lost my head immediately. I bawled hell out of him.

"You think I was in on the attempt to rob the bank, eh?" I snapped. "Don't you give me credit for any sense? If I wanted to rob banks, would I have been working like a slave for two years in this burg?"

"Where were you between the hours of one and two last night?" he insisted. "Answer that question. Several people saw you on the street. I want to know where you were, Kelly. I don't say you had anything to do with the attempt to rob the bank. I'm merely asking you to give me a statement."

I had been with Josephine in my apartment from eight until one-thirty. I was with her when the shooting began. I was

trying to think my way out of this jam. I realized that I was up against it good and strong.

"Where were you between the hours of one and two, Kelly?" he shot the question at me again and again. "You can clean up the matter by giving me a statement."

I couldn't tell him that I was with Josephine. That was out of the question. If I talked about her I knew that a scandal would be precipitated. I refused to give the chief a statement of my whereabouts between the hours of one and two, whereupon he declared:

"Well, I've got to lock you up."

So I was thrown into the jail. Everybody in the town believed that I had participated in the attempt to burglarize the bank. The town and county newspapers ran stories on "the man who had a chance and failed to make good."

The Governor was criticized for paroling me. They said I should have never been released, that I was a crook at heart, a born criminal, that I had had my chance, that I attempted to plunder the bank of a community that had extended the hand of comradeship to me.

Still I was dead innocent. Father Joe knew I was dead innocent. He was the only man to whom I made a statement of where I was and what I was doing between the hours of one and two.

He advised me to speak up.

"Tell them where you were," he said, "but surely Miss ——— will come forward and clear you of this charge."

"No," I told Father Joe, "I can't involve her in a nasty scandal. If she wants to talk, why, then that's different."

"But," Father Joe went on, "if she loves you, she won't see you go to prison for a crime of which you're innocent. If she's the right sort she will come forward."

But she didn't "come forward."

The authorities couldn't make out a case against me, but they did succeed in convincing the Governor that I had been a party to the attempt to burglarize the bank. So His Excellency revoked my parole, and back I went to complete my six-year term. Father Joe was furious. He knew I was innocent. He wanted to go to the Governor, but I protested.

I now hated Josephine's "guts." In my opinion she was in-

ferior to some of the so-called prostitutes that I had known along the underworld trails. Some of the women of the streets that I had known were game and square and would go to hell for their men. This lady from the ranks of the square-shooters was yellow. Still I couldn't act the rat. I buried her. I was through with square-shooting women for the rest of my life. There would be no more lofty ideas about the racket along the straight and narrow. All straight and narrow folks were blacklisted forever.

I began to plan a get-away from the stir. Then I got another good break. Father Joe came to the prison one day with a parole, a conditional parole. He had told the Governor the story of where I was on the night that the burglars had tried to rob the bank. He told him the story of my relationship with Josephine extending over a period of four years. He informed the Governor that I hadn't told the chief of police where I was between the hours of one and two merely because I didn't want to involve Miss ——— in a dirty scandal. The Governor's daughter was brought into the conference. Edna admitted that she had met me with Josephine and that Josephine had confessed to her that she was in love with me. When the Governor heard Father Joe's narrative he saw at once that I had been the victim of circumstances.

"Does Kelly know," he asked Father Joe, "that you were coming here to plead his cause and that you were going to tell me about his affair with Miss ———?"

"He has refused to talk about Miss ———," the old priest told him. "Time and again he has protested against my coming to see you, but I thought it my duty as a priest to let you know that he's innocent, regardless of the feelings of Miss ——— or her family. I couldn't stand by and see him sacrificed."

The parole stipulated that I must leave the state and never enter it again and that I should never make an effort to communicate with or see Miss Josephine ———. Father Joe assured him that I was through with the young lady and I was. And she was through with me.

CHAPTER XVI

HUNTED FROM THE "STRAIGHT AND NARROW"

IF I could have foreseen what fate had in store for me I think I would have given up all hopes of ever beating my way back to the ranks of Society. What the fiendish prison masters did to me was nothing compared with what I suffered on my way back. And yet these trials to which I refer and about which I shall now write played no small part in the moral and mental evolution which eventually swept over me, making me a better man than I ever would have been if I hadn't undergone them. I have learned, as Emerson once said, that "strength is born in the rugged battle of fate."

If I hadn't been born and bred in an atmosphere that would have distorted the body and soul of a saint, I might not have ever developed into an underworld man; and yet if I hadn't been an underworld mongrel and hadn't been brutalized in prisons and hounded and persecuted from pillar to post when I tried to go up, I'm certain that I would not have been the man that I am to-day. I do not regret having been a criminal. I do not regret having been slugged and brutalized in prisons. I do not long for the blood of the police who ran me bow-legged when I was trying to come back. I toss a kiss to the holier-than-thou Puritans who ostracized me and viewed me as a social leper.

When the Governor revoked my parole, you will recall my saying that I was through with square-shooters and particularly with square-shooting women. I thought I was going back to the underworld again. But I changed my mind when Father Joe obtained the second parole for me. I was determined to make good. I was determined to convince the world that there was absolutely no truth in the creed of the copper, "Once a crook always a crook."

I had caught a vision of what I should have been if the cards hadn't been stacked against me in the game of life.

When I compared the vision of what I was with what I should have been, I went on.

There was always, after I woke up, a little of the student and a little of the scholar in me. I mean to say that, after I woke up, I learned as I lived. I tried to get something out of everything that happened to me. I got something out of my experiences in the little burg where I made my first failure. I learned a thing or two about human nature. I learned that men and women could be hypocritical and cruel and yet pray and sing psalms to the glory of God. I learned that the man with the brand of the ex-convict on his back received very little consideration and very much scorn from the Society that was responsible for what he was. Society gave me hell for being a criminal and yet it was responsible for my having become a criminal. I might just as well have been a lawyer, a doctor, a first rate mechanic, a judge, or captain of industry, if I had had the opportunities, but Society never for a moment entertained the idea of its responsibility to me.

I was not quite so naïve when I came out of prison the second time. I decided to get as far away as I possibly could from the small town men and women. I decided to try the big cities. I thought I could lose myself in a big city.

"I'll start in a big city," I concluded. "I can bury myself in a big city until I have made good."

So I beat it out to Chicago for my second attempt. I had never been in Chicago before. None of the dicks knew me personally, though I was aware of the fact that they probably had my picture in the gallery and my Bertillon measurements and my finger prints.

Chicago is a crime-ridden city. For twenty-five or thirty years it has been the headquarters for crooks of all kinds from all over the world. There was a crime wave sweeping over the city when I arrived there, so I steered clear of saloons and tenderloin joints and gambling houses. I hiked over to the South Side and engaged a little furnished room and the day after my arrival I obtained a job. It wasn't much of a job, but I took it, figuring it as a stepping-stone to a better one later on.

It was in the shipping department of a big department store and I received twenty-five dollars a week for eleven hours

work. Shortly after I went to work for this concern, somebody began stealing. Detectives were employed and the thefts were traced to the shipping department. The dicks interrogated all us shipping department employees, asking us all sorts of questions: "Where were you born, where did you go to school, where did you work before you came here?" and so on. Of course I had to tell a lie or two and the dicks tripped me up in the lies that I told, whereupon they began to check up on me. Of course I didn't know a thing about the stealing; nevertheless, the dicks were convinced that I did when they caught me misrepresenting certain matters to them. They were very much interested in me. They took me over to the district police station and questioned me. Failing to get anything on me, they escorted me over to detective headquarters. I knew that the end was near, that they would get to me when I landed at headquarters. And they did after they fingerprinted me. They had my prints on file.

"Holy Christ!" the Chief Dick gasped when he learned who I was. "Holy Christ," he repeated. "Well, what do y' think of that—Jack Kelly, the bank burglar!"

If the Prince of Wales or the President of the United States had walked into the detective bureau unannounced, they couldn't have created any more excitement than I did when the dicks learned that I was Jack Kelly, the bank burglar.

They put me in the line up and rehearsed my history to the masked detectives. The Chief said that I had probably escaped from the New England prison, because, after he had figured up the time, according to the dope he had, I should still be there. I told him that I had been paroled and that I was "trying to go straight."

"Go straight?" he laughed. "You guys never go straight. Now listen,"—he began to get rough with me,—"what the hell are y' doing here, anyway?"

"Trying to make an honest living," I said.

"Come on, come on, come clean," he grunted. "What are y' trying to frame up?"

I insisted that I was trying to reform. He kept after me. He said that they had had a lot of safe robberies in Chicago and that he knew that I had been in several of them. I denied that I had participated in any safe or bank jobs in Chicago.

"I haven't had a burglar's tool in my hand in five years," I protested, "I've been trying to square it, Chief."

"Now," he continued to threaten me, "y' better come clean or we'll put the slug on y'."

"I tell you I haven't done anything crooked in five years."

"Come on, boys," he called to five of the big Irish dicks, "we'll third-degree him."

I had heard about the Chicago headquarters third degree and I knew that I was going to receive more hell than I had ever received before. And I did!

The six big coppers sat me in a chair in the middle of a room. This room, incidentally, was off in a corner of the cellar. There were no windows in it, no ventilation of any kind and it was illuminated with a big, glaring, incandescent bulb which hung from the ceiling. The furniture consisted of six or seven chairs and a small kitchen table. There were two cells in the room into which the victims of the third degree were tossed, two filthy, vermin-ridden cells minus the conventional prison cot and blankets. When the dicks tossed a grifter into one of the cells, he lay on the stone floor and fought with the rats and cockroaches that scampered over the floor all night long. The rats were not vicious. They were rather tame. They would jump on one's body, screech and dash away and come back again.

The six dicks surrounded me. Then they began to shoot questions at me in a rapid-fire fashion. Whenever I didn't answer the way they wanted—that is to say, whenever I didn't plead guilty to a crime—they took turns at slugging me. Now and then one would bang me with a black jack. Now and then one would hit me with his clenched fist. They gave me hell for about three hours, after which they tossed me into one of the cells and just as I was about to doze off into a sleep they woke me up and started in on me again.

I protested in vain that I hadn't done anything in Chicago. Every protest brought another slugging and a stream of oaths. They knocked me off the chair at least a dozen times. When I landed on the floor they kicked me until I was black and blue. They broke my nose, blacked my eyes. They beat me until I collapsed, then they tossed me into the cell again.

They razzle-dazzled me for twenty-six hours. They kept

at me until I was willing and ready to plead guilty to first-degree murder. They made me confess that I had committed crimes of which I was absolutely innocent and then the Chief Dick said:

"Why in the hell didn't y' tell us that in the foist place?"

I wanted to sleep. I was bruised and sore from head to feet. I told them that I had burglarized five safes in Chicago, though I hadn't had a burglar's tool in my hand for nearly five years. The newspapers wrote me up in fine style. They eulogized the detectives and then the Grand Jury indicted me on five counts of burglary.

But I didn't go to trial. I wrote a letter to a certain Chicago society woman who was interested in ex-convicts. A little Chicago pickpocket with whom I was celling in the Cook County Jail told me about this woman.

"Write that dame and tell her how they put the slug on y' and she'll come see y'," the dip said.

"She will?" I was skeptical.

"Sure she will," the dip declared. "Git her here before that nose and them eyes git better."

I was a sight to behold when the lady called at the jail. I was all bandaged up. I told the lady my story of what they did to me, how they beat me and made me confess to crimes that I hadn't committed. The next day I was discharged.

I beat it right out of Chicago, going to Philadelphia. I wasn't known in Philadelphia. I had never been arrested there, but I knew that my "record," my "mug" (picture) and Bertillon measurements were in the gallery.

I obtained a job with the Adams Express Company in Philadelphia. I was in their employ for eighteen months, starting in as a clerk and gradually working myself up to the responsible position of confidential investigator to the manager. I thought I had broken away from the past. I was happy at last. None of the Philadelphia dicks had "got to me." Foolish boy that I was, to think that a man can ever hide his past!

Just about the time that I began to entertain the idea that I was on the way to better things, the detectives landed on my trail. I was in the manager's office one afternoon when a Mr. Bearse, the manager of the Philadelphia branch of the Pinker-

ton Agency came in. I had known Bearse years ago. I recognized him instantly and I hurried out of the office before he could get a good look at me.

The day following Brother Bearse's visit, my boss, who was quite fond of me, called me into his office.

"Jack," he lowered his head, "we have decided to do away with this branch of the service so I guess I'll have to let you go."

Instantly I knew that Bearse had recognized me and had given my record to the Adams Express Company.

"Haven't my services been satisfactory, Boss?" I said.

"Perfectly satisfactory, Jack"—he couldn't look at me. "No complaint, just decided to do away with this department."

"Sudden decision, Boss, isn't it?" I laughed.

Then he raised his head. There were tears in his eyes. I leaned over the desk and looked him in the eyes.

"Boss," I said, "tell me the truth. Have you decided that my department has been abolished or did the Pinkertons tip me off?"

He admitted that Bearse had told him that I was an ex-bank burglar.

"Then I'm not supposed to live," I went on. "Society tells me that I can't live. I can't earn my living. If I am not permitted to earn my living, why then, there's nothing left for me but the underworld, is there, Boss?"

The boss was a good fellow in many ways, but he was only a figurehead, a cog in the machine who took his orders from the man higher up. I went to the men higher up.

"We are sorry," they said, "but we can't help it. We can't have ex-convicts in our employ; it's contrary to the principles of our organization."

"Well," I replied, "I've been with you eighteen months. I've worked hard. You promoted me because I was efficient. I've been in and out of the money-order department at all hours of the day and night. I have had all kinds of opportunity to steal from you. I have never stolen anything. I have never violated a trust. What about these things; aren't they worth some consideration? Am I condemned for the rest of my life?"

"Sorry," the Masters grinned, "so sorry, but nothing can

be done for you. It's against the principles of our organization to employ ex-convicts."

So once again I was high and dry on the peaks of failure. And all this occurred in the city that somebody christened the "City of Brotherly Love."

"Well," I said to myself, "there must be somebody in this man's world who will give me a chance; I'll try again."

So I tried again and again. I went to Providence. The dicks chased me out of Providence. I went to Washington. They chased me out of Washington.

"I'll try New York," I concluded. "She's a big burg and I may be able to get by in the Metropolis."

Now, please understand that these experiences with the detectives didn't discourage me. I had no ambition to kill any of them, no desire to go back to the underworld. Every time they gave me a kick it strengthened me, made me more determined than ever to succeed.

I ran from city to city looking for that man with the spirit of Christ, or at least the spirit of fair play and good sportsmanship in his heart. When I landed in New York I thought I would find him, but I didn't. The New York dicks were hell a mile, the toughest gang of man hunters and man-breakers that God Almighty ever created and the Chief of the gang was one of the roughest and coldest guys that I ever met. To-day, incidentally, this ex-chief rambles over the country delivering lectures on criminals. He has somebody write stories for him which now and then go into magazines and in which he talks about the crooks he has helped go straight. I know of many crooks that he "broke" body and soul, I never knew one that he helped!

The New York dicks rode me. I had now spent two years trying to beat my way back to Society. I had failed. It was not a case of "once a crook always a crook," it was nothing more than a case of not being allowed to work and live. I wanted to go straight. I gave substantial evidence of my ambition to go straight. I lived the life of a dog for two long years. I ate in catch-as-catch-can boarding houses and one-arm lunch rooms and slept in three-dollar-a-week furnished rooms, when I could have been living off the fat of the land and sleeping in the best hotels in the country. I was a money-getter. I

wasn't one of those two-for-a-nickel, petty-larceny thieves. I could have stolen a half million dollars in the two years that I spent on my knees along the straight and narrow. I had worked and prayed for two years and I was right back where I had started, an underworld dangler again.

"Well," I swore, "there'll be no more praying and no more working. To hell with prayers and work."

I was absolutely discouraged now. No man, I am quite sure, was ever so thoroughly unhappy as I. Still I hated to acknowledge defeat. I didn't want to go back to the underworld. I hesitated about doing that. I fought against it for a month or more, during which time I was "picked" up on four or five different occasions and carted down to headquarters to be "lined up" in front of the gang of masked dicks and have my history rehearsed and pointed out as the "mug that had a chance and couldn't make good."

There is a limit to what an ordinary human being can endure and I had about reached the limit of my endurance. I broke. I went back to underworld, but I went back as a crook who had lost his guts. I was a damn sight worse human being now than I had ever been. I had lost my courage; I was licked to a frazzle, down and out, a tramp!

I went looking for some of the underworld scum that I had known as a kid, Rose, "Harlem Benny," Johnny Mulcahey. I found them in Tom Quong's hop joint. I went back to the pipe again. The pipe brought peace of mind, contentment and happiness of a sort. I did anything and everything to make a dollar. Now the "dicks" didn't bother me. They didn't nail me any more and take me to police headquarters to line me up. They knew that I was bum, that I was a hop head, that I had lost my guts, so they passed me up whenever they met me on the street. The dicks had a queer philosophy. I could never get the philosophy of a copper who dogged a man to death while he was trying to go up and then gave him the go by when they had broken him. The average copper is pretty much of a savage in his dealings with underworld men, yet I have known coppers who were the soul of honor.

After five or six months in the nether world of the dope fiend, the pimp, the street walker and the badger game worker, all the lice of the human Pit, I landed in Blackwell's Island

to serve a sixty-day term for vagrancy. Here is where I rubbed elbows and fraternized with derelicts whom life had crushed beyond redemption. There were no class distinctions on the Island in those days. I was herded in a cell with a dope-crazed Chink, a negro, an Italian gangster, a pimp who was rotten with syphilis and an Irishman by the name of Eddie Martin who had skidded from the high spots. Eddie was a musician. He had composed some of the best music that had ever been played in a Broadway theater. At one time in his career he was earning weekly royalties amounting to $5,000 or more. He had married a woman, an actress, who was the toast of Broadway in the old days. At the height of his career his wife, who had a marvelous dramatic soprano voice, made her début in grand opera. Eddie was sitting on the top of the world. The adulation of the public was ringing in his ears. Money was pouring into his hands; he was famous.

Women sought him. He sought women. In the language of Wilde "he threw the pearl of his soul into a cup of wine and went down into the depths in search of new sensation." He tired of drinking. It no longer gave him a kick, no longer satisfied him. He began to hit the pipe and then he began to slide down the ladder and he kept on sliding until he was a wreck. He lost his wife. That hastened his descent. The man whom Broadway once called a genius and a hail-fellow-well-met was on his way to a pauper's grave at the age of thirty-eight.

Eddie had what hop smokers call "a fierce habit" when he landed in Blackwell's Island prison. "A fierce habit" means that the addict must have from eight to ten pills at least twice a day. Now, anybody that knows anything about drug addiction realizes that it is a terrible thing to suddenly deprive a man of his drug. Physicians will tell one that the drug habit should be broken gradually, that the man should be given so much to-day, so much less the next day and so on until he gets where he is in such mental and physical shape that the drug can be discontinued altogether. To the keepers of the Blackwell's Island prison this procedure was the bunk. Their motto was: "To hell with 'em; let 'em suffer."

So we suffered. I never endured such torment. I couldn't sleep. I had absolutely no appetite for food. I ached from

morn till night. It seemed that my whole system was burning up and that somebody was ramming pins and needles in every part of my body. It seemed that every organ had ceased to function except my brain, which everlastingly kept throwing visions of death on the screen of my imagination. I begged those keepers for "a shot." The only time in my life that I ever got on my knees and begged for anything was when I begged the hard-boiled keepers of Blackwell's Island for "a shot of dope." The keepers laughed at us and called us "coakies" and "hop heads."

I suffered the tortures of hell and yet I hadn't cultivated "a fierce habit." I had been smoking only six months. Eddie Martin had been "up against the stem" for three years, so he suffered infinitely more than I. I moaned and groaned for ten days. A rugged constitution probably warded off death. The drug hadn't taken the hold on me that it had on Eddie. Eddie's system was saturated with it when he arrived on the Island. I had undergone my siege when he got there and I did what I could for him when I learned that he had "a fierce habit." I pleaded with the hard-boiled screws to give him a shot. They laughed at me. Eddie was dying by degrees. I asked for the doctor. The doctor came to the cell and looked at Eddie.

"He'll die sure as hell if you don't give him a shot," I told the doctor; "he's an old smoker."

"You didn't die, did you?" he responded.

"I'm not the smoker he is," I pleaded; "this fellow's an old smoker. He's got a fierce habit."

"Forget it," he snapped and walked out of the cell.

That night Eddie Martin died in my arms in a convulsion of agony screaming the while: "Oh, Jesus! Oh, Jesus! Give me a shot!"

CHAPTER XVII

A GLIMPSE OF THE HEIGHTS

I STEERED clear of the "hop joints" of Chinatown when I was released from Blackwell's Island. Once again I got something out of an experience. Eddie Martin's tragic finish had made a terrible impression on me. I had seen some fearful sights, some almost indescribable living examples of the terrors and consequences of drug addiction while I was on the Island and in the Mongolian underworld, and I was determined that I would never fall into the clutches of dope again.

And it was no easy matter to break away from it. It requires a lot of guts to stay away from drugs after a man has been an addict. Time and again the old appetite took hold of me and on several occasions I went to Tom Quong's joint to have just a few more pills. But every time I picked up the "stem" I thought of Eddie Martin and other men and women whom the stem had broken.

The feeling and fear that I might eventually weaken and go back drove me out of New York. I wanted to get away from dope fiends. Dope fiends who lack the courage and determination necessary to "break away from the stuff" hate to see a brother addict triumph. They want comradeship on their way to oblivion and I never saw one who wouldn't rave with all sincerity that a shot now and then didn't hurt anybody.

I sidetracked the coakies and went back to the crime trail. I was a lone traveler. I enjoyed an almost unprecedented run of criminal success. Everything I tried to do panned out aces high. Every pete I knocked off had plenty of dough in it. I returned to New York flush with money and proceeded to live like a king. I kept away from underworld hangouts; therefore I managed to duck the dicks. I patronized first-rate hotels and hobnobbed only with the crime aristocrats such as high-grade "con men," big, sure-thing gamblers and transat-

lantic-liner card sharps. I had no time for pickpockets, dope fiends, badger game workers and stick-up men.

One of the cleverest of the old-time card sharps that ever dealt a hand from the bottom of a deck, Jimmy Fresno, sometimes called "Fresno Jimmy," took a fancy to me. He proposed that I "double up" with him and ride the boats.

"Not quite so much dough as there is in your racket," he said to me, "but a lot of fun and no desperate chances."

So I switched from the bank-burgling racket to the cards and joined Jimmy. I crossed on the old Cunarder *Teutonic* and it was while I was lining up my first sucker that I met and fell for a woman who was to play a big part in my future life.

Helen, her brother and mother were on their way to Rome. The brother, Eddie, looked like a prosperous mark. Neither Jimmy nor I was able to get a line on what business he was in. The average card man invariably has the history of his sucker at his fingertips before he proceeds to put the works on him. This information is very valuable sometimes. It frequently happens that a sucker won't squawk if he knows that you are hep to who he is, whereas he will always yelp if he thinks that you are not wise to his business, and his position in society if he should be a prominent person. We couldn't get the low down on Eddie; therefore I began to cultivate his sister and mother for the purpose of obtaining a little dope on him, what he did for a living, who he was and where he resided. In order to get to the mother and Helen I bribed the dining-room steward to give me a seat at their table and then I obtained an introduction.

The mother was a dear old lady. I thought of my Mom when I began to talk with her. Helen was twenty-odd, tall and stately, with a wealth of golden blond hair, big expressive, blue eyes and a rich, musical voice with graceful inflections in it. I hadn't been talking with her over five minutes before I was conscience-stricken, embarrassed. Here I am, I thought, a thief, a cheap, sure-thing card man, endeavoring to win the confidence of this fine girl so that Jimmy and I can put the works on her brother. I felt like a rat and then I thought to myself, "This is not my racket."

"This thing of bulling and trimming women," I thought,

"is a rat's game. A bank burglar takes chances. He gambles with life and death, matches his wits and his courage against the natives and the dicks. There's no gambling here. It's heads we win and tails the suckers lose. No guts are required in this racket. There's none of the spirit of the adventurer in these sure-thing card men."

This girl was different, altogether different, from any other woman I had ever met in this man's world.

"By God," I thought, "she's divine!"

There was something about her that suggested superiority! That's just how she affected me! I'm not overdrawing the picture! I was sure that Swinburne must have had such a woman in his mind when he wrote:

> "There will no man do for your sake, I think,
> What I would have done for the least word said.
> I had wrung life dry for your lips to drink,
> Broken it up for your daily bread;
> Body for body and blood for blood,
> As the flow of the full sea risen to flood
> That yearns and trembles before it sink,
> I had given, and lain down for you, glad and dead."

I had caught a vision of a beautiful soul in Helen.

The idea of trimming the brother died after my first talk with her. The idea of trimming anybody died. She had left me in a religious mood. Once again the ambition to go straight possessed me.

I had visions of losing her when she learned who and what I was. I was determined to win her. It seemed to me that I could do anything if I could win her. With her love I could mount the sunlit heights and without it life wouldn't be worth a damn! If there ever was such a thing as love at first sight I was sure that this was the real thing!

While I was on that boat I never gave a thought to trimming suckers. Jimmy Fresno was infuriated when I told him that I had fallen for Helen.

"Well, what a sap you are," he said; "what the hell chance has a grifter like you got with a swell broad like that. Listen, kid," he began to roar, "she may be stuck on y' now, but wait until she gets hep that you're 'a gun.'"

"There isn't going to be any more 'gunning,' Jimmy," I

replied. "I'm going straight from now on. I'm going to win her. I'm beating it back to the States on the next boat to make another stab at the straight and narrow."

Helen had told me that they were returning to the States a month later. She gave me the name of the boat and the date upon which they were sailing. Jimmy talked me into remaining with him until that date and I did and the six days that I spent with Helen on the return trip were six days of unalloyed bliss, the six happiest days that I had ever lived!

I had represented myself as being in the safe and vault game. I knew safes and vaults from stem to stern. It was the only business that I knew, but I didn't tell her what I had been doing with safes and vaults. I left her with the impression that I was selling them and not wrecking them.

I was invited to call when we landed. I called the night of the day that we landed. The mother had taken quite a fancy to me. The brother thought I was a nice fellow. Every member of the family of six sisters and three brothers voted me "O.K."

But I felt like a bum when I entered the home, a social leper, a man who had absolutely no right there. I felt like a cheater, out of place.

I was haunted with the fear of exposure. Every time I went to the home I expected "a tip off."

"Some copper," I thought, "will see me entering or leaving the house, after which he'll investigate and tell them who I am."

I was never so unhappy.

"If she ever gets wise," I thought, "it'll be all off."

Up until this time I hadn't talked love with her, but I knew that she liked me if she didn't love me. She must have seen that I was madly in love with her by the way I looked at her and hung on every word that she uttered.

A month had gone by. Night and day I thought about telling her what I was.

"It's the only manly thing to do," I thought. "Besides, I've got to do it before some 'copper' does it."

I had an idea that I could make her mother understand and I had an idea that I could win the mother, but I wasn't so sure about Helen.

In the meantime I had planned what I was going to do. I decided to go to Detroit and enter some automobile factory and work like hell until I had established myself.

"I'll tell her," I concluded; "then if she's in love with me and consents to wait until I have made good, I'll make good as sure as hell."

But I could never get up enough courage to "come clean." Every time I called I was determined to tell her the story, but the resolution died when I got there and I began to think that it might be the last time that I would ever see her if I confessed that I was a bank burglar.

Then the crash came! One night after I left her home I was arrested by two Central Office men in a Broadway café.

"Where have y' been, Jack," they said to me. "We've been looking for y' for six months?"

"Looking for me?" I exclaimed. "What for?"

"Oh," they replied, "for that job up in the State of ———."

I withhold the name of the state for personal reasons.

They took me down to Headquarters. The next morning my picture was on the front page of the morning *World.* I sat in a cell in the Tombs and read the newspaper account of my career as a cracksman and as I read I thought of Helen.

"This is the blow-off," I thought; "they'll see this. They'll recognize my mug. I'll never see her again."

The coppers had me "right." The job in ———— was "a square rap" (The police had the goods on me).

I was on my way for at least a ten-year term. But that didn't worry me. I was only concerned about Helen and her family. I had met a number of their friends. They had introduced me as a business man. The friends would talk about me. The family had entertained a crook. The friends would talk about the family entertaining a crook. I had acted the rat.

"I should have never gone to her home," I thought. "That was a rat play."

I got some consolation out of the knowledge that the police had not discovered that I had been visiting her home.

"It would be hell," I thought, "if that should ever get to the newspapers. I'm glad of that."

In those days prisoners in the Tombs talked with friends and relatives who visited them through the bars of the cell

doors. I had a hunch that one of the brothers would come to see me. I didn't think that they would come out of sympathy, but merely out of curiosity. I didn't want to see any of them. I didn't want Helen to see me. I didn't think I could live through the ordeal.

The hunch was a right one. Eddie called at the Tombs the day after my arrest.

"I'm sorry," he said in an indifferent, matter-of-fact fashion. "I saw the paper this morning. I couldn't believe it was you, Jack, so I thought I would come down to satisfy myself."

He said his mother had seen the paper, that every member of the family had seen it except Helen.

"Then she doesn't know?"

"No," he said, "she doesn't know."

Then he began to moralize. He talked about what a wonderful girl Helen was and he said that he wanted to see her marry a man equally as wonderful, a clean man, a man with character and reputation. He was right. She was a saint while I was a bum. I realized how far above me she was and it only was by realizing how good she was that I caught a glimpse of my own unworthy self. I could never hope to reach her, I thought.

"But," I thought, "they can't keep me from loving her. I'll always love her."

When Eddie left me that day I fell on the cot in the Tombs cell and shed bitter tears. I think I might have done "the Dutch act" (committed suicide) that day if I could have got my hands on a knife. It was the only time in my life that I entertained the idea of "throwing up the sponge." In later years when I got acquainted with Goethe my mind always went back to that day in the Tombs whenever I read:

> "Who never ate his bread in sorrow,
> Who never spent the midnight hours
> Weeping and waiting for the morrow,—
> He knows you not, ye heavenly powers."

Further still I know what Wordsworth meant when he said:

> "Suffering is permanent, obscure, and dark,
> And has the nature of infinity."

"By Jesus," I swore, "I'm going up, up, up! Nothing will stop me."

I sat down and wrote a letter to John O'Hara Cosgrave, the Editor of the New York *Sunday World*. The *World* had run a story about me in the Sunday Magazine section in which I was pictured as a hardened man of crime, as a man who had his chance and failed. I wrote the Editor, telling him that I had failed merely because the police and the Pinkertons had hounded and dogged me from pillar to post.

"If you want the real story of my failure," I wrote him, "come see me."

He sent to see me one of the finest fellows I ever met, George Carteret, the assistant Sunday Editor, who has since gone to eternity! The memory of George Carteret's first visit is still green! It seems but a few days ago, though it was nearly twelve years back. Here was a great, whole-souled, Christ-like human being, the first I had ever met! George got me. He understood me. He understood that I had been up against forces that were too strong for me. He saw at once that I didn't understand, that I was naïve in a sense, a dreamer, a drifter and altogether too sentimental. George gave me some good advice and I ate it up.

"When you get out again," he said, "come see me and I'll help you. But while you're in prison this time read, think, study. You ought to read Spencer. He'll help build up your mind. Read Ridpath's 'History of the World,' read heavy stuff to develop your mind. Keep away from light stuff."

I had told George that I was crazy about Wilde and Swinburne and Laura Jean Libbey. He laughed at me.

"Poetry is all right," he said, "but you can't cash in on it and Laura Jean Libbey is all right for boys and girls, but not for you. What you require is information. Develop your mind."

George told me about men who had made good.

"You'll make good when you acquire viewpoint and understanding," he said. "Don't lose your courage, old boy. Stick to your determination to get up and you'll get up."

George Carteret cheered me. I had never met anybody that sympathized with me as he did and I thought of how different

things might have been if I had only met a man like him while I was endeavoring to rehabilitate myself. If the Pinkerton man who "tipped me off" to the Adams Express people had been a man with some of the spirit of a Carteret in his heart, I thought, and if the manager of the Adams Express Company had been a Carteret, I wouldn't be languishing in this cell to-day with ten long years staring me in the face.

Once more my mind took a religious turn. I prayed as I had never prayed before. I asked God to help me. I talked with Father Reilly, the Chaplain in the Tombs. He, too, cheered me and assured me that I would go up if I kept on praying.

Then one day about two weeks after my arrest Helen's mother came to see me. I am not able to paint a word picture of my feelings when I saw her standing at my cell door.

"She's here," I thought, "simply because she's curious and not because she sympathizes."

But I was wrong. She came because she was sorry for me. She came, she told me, because she knew I was in love with her daughter and her daughter was in love with me. She didn't want to come. She had fought against it. She had kept the news of my arrest from Helen, but Helen couldn't understand my absence, my sudden disappearance. She was "worrying herself sick," the mother said. She, the mother, wanted to know if I had ever entertained the idea of going straight, how I ever went crooked, what started me and so on.

I came clean with the mother. I told all my story. I told all about my efforts to come back.

"I want to do right," I cried, "and I intend to do right and I love Helen to death; as God is my Judge, I love her!"

"Helen's a good girl," she went on, "and I had ambitions for her to marry well, but I'm afraid that my ambitions will never be realized."

I assured her that I knew that I was not worthy of her daughter.

"But," I hastened to add, "I will make myself worthy of her. Give me a chance. Have confidence in me and I'll get up."

She wanted to know what faith I professed and when I told her that I was a Catholic she seemed impressed.

"That's good," she smiled. "You're going to succeed if you attend to your duties. Have you seen the priest since you've been here?"

The smile broadened when I told her that I had talked with Father Reilly and that I intended to go to confession. She said she would tell Helen where I was when she went back home and then she added:

"If she wants to come see you, it's her own business."

The next day Helen visited me. There isn't anything in the realm of language to describe my feelings. I can only say that I was humiliated. The cell was dark. I thanked God for that. She couldn't see my face. I couldn't talk. I didn't know what to say. Then she broke the silence with a remark that thrilled me from head to foot:

"You should have told me," she said; "it wouldn't have made any difference."

The tears were streaming down her face.

"I'm terribly sorry," was all I could mutter. "Time and again I had made up my mind to tell you, but I could never go through with it. I hope you'll forgive me."

"I didn't know anything about it until last night, when my mother told me where you were," she replied. "But you should have told me."

"It's good of you to come see me," I stammered. "I guess you were surprised when you heard the news."

"I couldn't imagine what happened to you," she said. "How in the name of God did you ever get into such a business?"

"Environment, associations; I never had a chance to be anything else but a crook." My heart was pounding like a trip hammer. Humiliation lashed me from head to foot.

I told her a thing or two about my life as a kid, my parents, my home and my experience in the reform school, my career as a bank burglar.

"Well," she sobbed, "where did you learn to talk so well? You certainly must have had some schooling."

"I had two years schooling," I replied, "and what little I know I picked up in prisons."

"Terrible," she uttered a tired sigh, "but you're still a young man and you can make something out of yourself if you only will."

"I'm through now," I declared passionately. "Through," I repeated, "through forever. I'm going up. I'll be a big fellow some day. I know I can make good."

"Of course you can make good,"—her soft, rich voice, the voice of a sweet and gentle soul, thrilled me,—"but you must pray, put your trust in God and keep away from your old associates."

A keeper came to my cell at this part of our talk to inform me that a Mr. Mulcahey and a Miss Rose Johnson were downstairs waiting to see me.

"I don't want to see them," I told the keeper. "I'm through with the underworld people. I don't want to see anybody except Miss Delaney, here."

"That's a good start if you'll only stick to it," Helen said. "You've got to keep away from bad company."

"Don't worry," I assured her, "I'll keep away from bad company from now on, for I'm on my way to better things as sure as there is a God in Heaven. There isn't anything that I won't be able to do if I know that you'll be waiting for me at the end of the trail."

"I'll wait for you," she lowered her head, "and I'll be praying for you."

At that moment my reverence for her was pyramided. Her very presence had a regenerating effect upon me, but her words, "I'll be waiting for you and praying for you," filled me with a sublime ardor! It is with such a frame of mind, I thought, that sinners come to the penitent form!

I forgot that I was in prison when she left me after that first visit.

"By God, by God," was my never ending cry, "I go up from here. This is the starting point of a new and better life. I'm on my way. Nothing can stop me."

The safe-cracking charge in the New England State didn't worry me. The fact that I was on my way for another ten year "bit" didn't give me very much concern. These things were merely mileposts on the road to a complete moral and mental evolution and a complete social rehabilitation!

CHAPTER XVIII

HERBERT SPENCER

I HAD decided to withhold the name of the New England State which was clamoring for my blood, but now it seems to me that I should call a spade a spade since some very momentous events occurred there, events that played no small part in my life, the life of a man whom police officials had pronounced "a hopelessly incorrigible criminal."

It was Connecticut, the "Old Nutmeg State."

The great awakening came when I arrived in the Bridgeport jail to stand trial for a number of safe-blowing charges. New York detectives escorted me there and on the way up they never ceased talking about what "the hicks would do to me when they got me in their grasp."

The coppers couldn't understand my indifference and I made no effort to make them understand.

The jail was crowded with murderers, pickpockets, gangsters, petty-larceny thieves of all kinds and a horse thief or two. It was the dirtiest jail that I had ever been in and the keepers, with two exceptions, a fellow by the name of O'Neil and one by the name of Tibbets, were indeed a hard lot.

There was one Italian there who had been condemned to death, a little Wop of twenty-odd who responded to the pseudonym of "Tough Tony."

Day and night he was forever singing snatches of folk songs from his native Sicily or arias from "Trovatore," "Pagliacci" and "Rigoletto."

"You should be praying, Tony," I said to him one day, "instead of singing."

He laughed at me and declared that he wasn't afraid to die. A string of oaths breezed through his lips when I suggested Heaven and Hell to him. He didn't "believe."

"When y' die, y' die," he grunted.

I admired him for his gameness, but I pitied him for his

stupidity. I couldn't understand his skepticism and when I tried to convince him that there was a God, a Heaven and a Hell, he only swore and laughed at me. We developed into great friends and I was about the only man in the jail that could handle him. He comes into my story again later on.

One night "Tough Tony" woke me out of a sound sleep with his singing and it was on this night that the great awakening came to which I have referred. I was in a reminiscent mood. My life spread out before me in a series of mental pictures. I lingered on that portion of it that had been spent trying to rehabilitate myself. I lived through every defeat, every discouragement and almost every thought that had occurred during those two bloody, heart-breaking years.

"What the hell was wrong with me?" was the question that came back to me again and again insistently.

The answer came back to me:

"You failed because you were not equipped."

"Not equipped?" I hung on the words.

Several minutes flitted by before the real significance of the term "not equipped" dawned on me. Then I thought of what George Carteret had said to me:

"You'll make good when you acquire viewpoint and understanding."

Up until this time I hadn't seriously considered what George had said to me. Now I got him. I got myself. Viewpoint and understanding could only be acquired by knowledge, contact, information.

I saw at once that I was "a sap," and that I had failed simply because I didn't know how to play the game. The coppers were smarter than I. They outthought me, razzle-dazzled me, framed me and in a word did just what they pleased with me.

"Well," I concluded, "I must be pretty dumb when a copper can outthink me."

Heretofore I had always harbored the idea that I was a smart fellow, superior in many ways to the coppers, but now I saw that I was not smart. I recognized the mental superiority of the coppers.

"Read Spencer, he'll build up your mind," George Carteret's words were ringing in my ears.

"Spencer, Spencer," I was unconsciously pronouncing the name, "I wonder who he is. I never heard of him before."

I decided to read Spencer and here is where I got my first idea of who he was and what he represented. There was a Catholic priest in Bridgeport who was interested in me. He had read about me and when I arrived at the jail he paid me a visit. He wanted to help me, he said, wanted to get me right with God so that I would go straight. He volunteered to provide me with "good books," books which would help me, whereupon I wrote out on a piece of paper the names of books that I wanted to read. I had Herbert Spencer on that list and Ridpath. I watched him as he went over the list.

"Spencer, Herbert Spencer," his face reddened. "Who told you to read him? You don't want to read that man's books. No good Catholic should read Herbert Spencer. I'll scratch off his name and send you 'The Lives of the Saints'; that will do you more good than Herbert Spencer."

Now I was more curious than ever about Spencer.

"What's wrong with him?" I thought. "Why shouldn't I read him. Carteret told me Spencer would build up my mind and now the priest tells me that no good Catholic should read him. Who is right and who is wrong?"

His Reverence sent me *The Lives of the Saints, Pilgrim's Progress,* and one or two other books of a religious nature. I wanted Spencer. I was curious. I sent out to a bookstore for a set of Spencer. "I'm going to find out who in hell this fellow Spencer is."

So the great discovery began. I opened up the volume marked *First Principles.* I started on the first chapter titled, "Religion and Science." What a revelation! And what a puzzle! His terms staggered me. I didn't get his ideas. They were beyond me.

"Holy smokes," I muttered, "I've got to have a dictionary."

So I bought a dictionary and went to it again. I read that first chapter fifteen or twenty times before I understood it. The lights were extinguished at nine o'clock. I bribed the night guard to let me have a few candles so that I could read after the lights had been "doused." I was traveling in a new world now. I went into the second chapter "Ultimate Religious Ideas." I had to read that over and over again before

I could digest it and all the while I felt my faith in the things that the priests and the sisters had taught me slipping.

"Now I know why the priest didn't want me to read Herbert Spencer," I said to myself. "No wonder he didn't want me to read him."

But Spencer, I thought, had it all over the priests and sisters.

"The cause is a cause of the effect; the effect is an effect of the cause."

"What's he mean, I wonder?" That staggered me absolutely. I recall that I spent an entire day trying to analyze what he meant by, "The cause is a cause of the effect; the effect is the effect of the cause."

I walked the cell floor day and night trying to dope out what he meant. I talked with the prisoners, the jailers. I couldn't sleep and I wasn't so very much concerned about food. I couldn't rest until I had mastered the meaning of that phrase. I recall as though it were only yesterday the thrill I got when I mastered the phrase, caught the significance of it. I read on, climbing from height to height of intellectual living and when I had finished the chapter on, "The Relativity of All Knowledge" I was captivated beyond any possibility of expression in words. And when I had completely read *First Principles*—Well, Herbert Spencer was my God!

Still I hadn't digested him. Heavens, no! I had merely caught a glimpse of what he said, but I was intoxicated with a desire to understand, so I went through *First Principles* again and again. I read nothing else but that for five months, day and night, from the time I got up in the morning until I fell asleep at night on the prison cot with the book in my hand. I bought twenty or thirty, or more, writing pads upon which I would jot down notes and impressions. I must have written at least a hundred thousand words.

The jail gang said I was "nuts." The priest with whom I had many arguments about the origin of the universe, after I began to read Spencer, said I was doomed for a siege in the fires of Hell. I had always believed what the priests told me about the origin of the world, but now I knew that the priests were dreamers, guessers, theorists, and that they embraced and preached a philosophy that had utterly no foundation in fact. Day after day the priest tried to proselyte me to his views and

when he cornered me in an argument I ran for *First Principles* and read him chapter after chapter on cause and effect, evolution and dissolution, the transformation and equivalence of forces, space, time, matter and motion.

"Convince me that Herbert Spencer is wrong and I'll go back to the Church," I argued. "You say a personal God made the world. Then who made the personal God?"

The immaculate conception idea and the three-in-one proposition, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I rejected absolutely.

"That's the bunk," I said to myself. "Spencer's right; the priest is wrong."

It was a new world that Spencer presented to my startled gaze. It had never occurred to me that there were any laws outside of man-made laws. My conception of law began and ended with jails, courthouses, policemen, detectives, and prisons. But now I saw that everything moved and lived in accordance with some law and that all things were related in some way to all other things and that it was impossible to be otherwise. There were laws of psychology, biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy. It was in obedience to law that the snake crawled along the ground, that the bird flew in the air, that the sun rose and set.

I began to apply what I learned from Spencer to my own life. There was a time when I thought that the man at the head of the procession was a superior person, that he and I came from different worlds, that he was of a different kind of clay. Judges, for instance, had always been gods in my opinion. Big business men were geniuses. All the big fellows of life were different. I could never be like them. But now I knew that they were just men like myself and that the only difference between them and me was the difference in mental processes, thought, brain capacity. They were humanly no better than I. I could do what they had done and I would have done what they had done if I had had the same opportunities that they had had. I saw at once that I, too, might have been a judge or a big business man if I had been given a chance. I saw at once that I became a criminal primarily because I was reared in an environment that created abnormal mental processes. I was always hungry, dirty, ragged, sick. I had no place to play. I lived a sordid life; therefore it was

the most natural thing in the world for me to accept twisted, unscientific philosophy.

My philosophy was certainly unscientific, because I now realized that I had been playing a game, robbing banks, where the odds were overwhelmingly against me. Before I took up Spencer it never entered my mind that I was playing a losing game. Please note that the prison masters had never been able to change my philosophy with their unspeakable barbarisms. I never responded to punishment. The prison masters couldn't beat ideas into my crime-ridden brain, but if they had been intelligent men, students of life and conduct, they might have talked a few ideas into my juvenile brain. If that stupid judge who sent me to the reform school when I was a kid of fourteen had been a student of Spencer, if he had known anything about cause and effect, if he had known that the average man's philosophy of life is the direct result of what the world has done to him, the stupid judge might have sent me to a hospital or a psychiatrist instead of a reform school. The reform school strengthened the twisted philosophy that I could plunder and steal and kill and get away with it.

I was in the midst of a third reading of *First Principles* when I was hailed into the Fairfield County Court to stand trial for the Connecticut safe-blowing charges. There were four charges. I was convicted on all four counts, though I was "dead innocent" of two charges. The Judge ordered me to stand for sentence.

"Anything to say?" He glared at me over his cheaters.

"Nothing, your Honor,"—I looked at him and smiled,—"except that I'm innocent of two of those charges. You got me right on two and wrong on two."

He grinned knowingly.

"A likely story from a criminal of your caliber," he began to denounce me, "from a man whose entire life has been spent in an orgy of crime. I'm familiar with your history, Kelly. I have your record before me. It is evident that you are hopeless. The Governor of ———— gave you a chance some three or four years ago which you failed to take advantage of, so that there is nothing left for me to do but impose the maximum penalty. I regret that I can't give you more. I sentence

you to serve a term of ten years at hard labor in the State's Prison."

"May I say a word, Your Honor?"

He nodded his head.

"First of all," I began, "I am not hopeless. I am not a hardened criminal. I have lived as I have lived merely because I didn't know better. I didn't know how to think in the old days. Recently I have learned how to think and I want to make this prediction, Your Honor, and I should be glad to have you bear it in mind: This is the last time that I'll ever come into a court as a criminal." When I started to talk he was scribbling on a piece of paper, but now he had dropped the pencil and he was listening to me attentively.

"You referred to my parole by the Governor of ———— and my failure to reform," I went on. "You intimated that I failed to make good because I'm what the world calls 'a natural-born criminal'! That isn't so. I repeat that I'm not 'a natural-born criminal.' I spent two years trying to reform. They were two of the toughest years that I ever lived. Every job I obtained I lost because every time a detective ascertained that I was in the employ of a concern he gave my history to my employers. I am before you to-day simply because I didn't know how to play the game along the straight and narrow, but the next time I land on the straight and narrow, I'll win."

"You say you spent two years trying to reform?" his honor asked me.

"Two years and three months," I replied.

He called the two New York detectives over to the bench. They and the Judge began to talk in low tones. I couldn't hear what they said, but now and then the coppers shook their heads, which meant just one thing to me—they were telling the Judge that I had never made a serious effort to get up. The coppers were determined to get me. Presently the Judge spoke to me again:

"The New York officers tell me that you were constantly in the company of criminals after you had been paroled out of the ———— State's Prison. Is that right, gentlemen?" He addressed the coppers.

"Das right, Jedge," the coppers grinned. "He ain't never made no effort to reform; he's a habitshal crook."

The Judge evidently thought I was lying and that I was pleading for mercy when I told him that I had been hounded and dogged by coppers for two years and three months.

"If I thought for a moment that there was a particle of truth in what you say," he continued, "I would be disposed to be merciful, but I'm satisfied that you have misrepresented the police."

"I'm not seeking mercy," I replied. "I don't want my liberty. I'm not yet equipped for liberty. I want to go to prison until I have obtained an equipment. I'm delighted that you gave me ten years. If I went out into the world to-day I should probably fail as I failed before. I prefer to go to prison where I can finish what I have started, but every word that I have uttered relative to my efforts to reform for two years is the truth. The detectives have lied to you."

His Honor looked at the detectives and then he peered at me over his spectacles. I could see that he was doing a lot of thinking, that he was in a quandary, that he didn't know whether to believe me or the cops. Finally he addressed me again:

"What has brought about the change in your viewpoint?"

"Herbert Spencer," I said.

"You've been reading Herbert Spencer?" An expression of astonishment spread over his face.

"Yes, sir," I declared firmly. "I've been reading him religiously, passionately. He has opened my eyes and my mind and I'm on my way to better things."

"Tell me some of the things you have read?" he asked incredulously. His manner indicated that he didn't believe that I had been reading Spencer.

"I've been reading him for six months, eight and ten and twelve hours a day," I said. "I've read the data of philosophy, the continuity of motion, the indestructibility of matter, the persistence of relations among forces, the rhythm of motion, the instability of the homogeneous. I've read *First Principles* from cover to cover twenty times or more."

"You have, eh?" His face lighted up with a smile.

I could see that he was still skeptical.

"By God," I muttered to myself, "I wish he would ask me some more questions about Spencer. I'd tell him a thing or

two; I'll knock him off the bench if he asks me a question or two."

The thought had no sooner flashed through my brain than he said:

"How does Spencer define life?"

"As the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations," I snapped convincingly.

He was interested now. He began to shoot questions at me. He asked me where I was born, how long I had been a criminal, who my parents were, how many sisters and brothers I had, how old I was when I entered the underworld. I gave him a brief sketch of my environment as a kid and when I told him that I was working when I was twelve and that I was in the reform school before I was fourteen he shook his head and said:

"Life hasn't been very kind to you, has it?"

"Well," I had to chuckle, "it might have been worse."

"Kelly," a grave emotion colored his words, "I think there's some good in you. There must be some good in a man who can interest himself in Spencer. I don't think you're as bad as you have been painted—no," he hesitated, "you can't be. You're a man with possibilities, great possibilities, and I should like to see you succeed and I should like to help you. The court has always been disposed to help men who have made mistakes. I'm going to change that sentence that I just imposed. I'll make it three years instead of ten."

I thanked the Judge, Judge Reid, one of the finest human beings and the only humane judge with whom I ever came in contact. I assured him that I'd never give him cause to regret what he did and he in turn assured me of his faith in me.

So I went to the State's Prison at Wethersfield to serve the three years. "Tough Tony" and I went together, Tony was on his way to the gallows, while I was on my way to a better life.

I dove into Spencer again. I read him on an average of six hours a day for nine months. I read nothing else. I had no appetite for anything else. He was the great necromancer, leading me out of the wilderness of ignorance and stupidity. When I first began to read him you will recall my saying that I sidetracked the things that the priests and sisters had taught

me relative to the origin of the world. Spencer dynamited all their theories, but when he said: "the power which the Universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable" it seemed to me that there must be a guiding hand somewhere and so the tendency toward atheism died. I was converted to a belief in a Supreme Being of some kind. I am convinced that there is a Beyond. But what may be beyond I don't know. I embrace the philosophy of Shaw:

"It is enough to know that there is a Beyond."

I had made a special effort to proselyte "Tough Tony" to a belief in a God, but the little Wop still came back with:

"When y' die, y' die; there ain't no God."

But Tony began to break as the date of his execution rolled around and on the night of his execution the Warden came to my cell:

"Tony's doubled up like a jackknife, Jack," he said. "He's calling for you; come on over and see if y' can stiffen him up a little."

The hangman and his two assistants were standing outside the cell. A priest was inside sitting on the cot, trying to talk with Tony, who was screaming madly:

"I don't want to die, I don't want to die!"

"Here's Jack, Tony," the Warden spoke to him.

I stepped in the cell. His eyes were bloodshot from crying and he was livid with fright. He threw his arms around my neck and sobbed:

"I don't want to die, Jack, I don't want to die!"

"Come on, Tony." I tried to cheer him up, though my heart was bleeding for the poor devil. "I thought you were a game guy. Everybody's got to die some time or other. Come on, be a man and die game."

Up until this time he had steadfastly refused spiritual consolation, but now he indicated a desire to confess and receive communion before he went to the gallows. I stepped out of the cell when the priest prepared to hear his confession.

"Wait," the Warden stopped me when I headed for my cell, "he may break again."

And so I stood there talking with the bloody executioners while the priest heard Tony's confession. I thought about the personal God that I had loved once and what the priests had told me about His infinite wisdom and boundless mercy. I

thought about the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." I couldn't reconcile that commandment with the bloody scene that was about to be staged. I had a vision of Jesus on the cross, the Jesus who was supposed to have died so that "all sinners might be saved." But here was a sinner who was going to tbe strangled to death. I couldn't get the angle of the priests at all and I was now more convinced than ever that this personal God, if there was such a thing, was nothing more than a fiend!

And Tony did weaken again. Evidently the confession didn't strengthen him for his terrible ordeal. He acted like a maniac. He fought the guards when they began to shackle his hands behind his back. He cried to me to stay with him and then, thinking that it might cheer him up, I volunteered to die for him. Of course, it was impossible, but I thought it would make him feel a little better.

"I'll die for you, Tony," I said. "What the hell is death? Death is nothing. Everybody's got to die."

I walked with the procession of death into the execution chamber. Tony mounted the steps laboriously, dragging one foot after the other. He stood there quivering while the hangman fastened his legs together, and just before the butcher slipped the black cap over his face Tony fainted. Then one keeper held his feet, while the hangman put on the cap and fastened the rope around his neck. The touch of the rope on his neck brought a weird, bloodcurdling scream from Tony. Suddenly the body went up in the air at a terrific clip. The rope was tightening as the body shot up and Tony was strangling, emitting gurgles, gasps and a noise like a death rattle. The body dropped as quickly as it had shot up, followed by the sound of breaking bones, after which the body spun like a top on the end of the rope.

I was sick after that scene. It disorganized me mentally and physically. Day and night for a month or more Wilde's verse came back to me:

> "They hanged him as a beast is hanged;
> They did not even toll
> A requiem that might have brought
> Rest to his startled soul,
> But hurriedly they took him out,
> And hid him in a hole."

I was off the priests for life after Tony's execution. As a matter of fact, I had embraced Emerson's creed long before I saw Tony executed.

"Prayer," said Emerson, "as a means to effect a private end is theft and meanness. It supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness."

I was through begging anybody for anything.

"Hereafter," I swore, "I'll do battle for what I want."

Spencer had taught me that life was nothing more than the survival of the fittest. That was true of every kind of life from the fishes in the ocean to the birds in the air. The strong survived; the weak perished. I had been a weakling, but now I was on my way to strength, mental strength, viewpoint, understanding and a knowledge of how the game of life should be played.

Ambition was pyramided. I went from Spencer to Darwin. I read *The Origin of the Species* as religiously as I had read *First Principles, Education* and the rest of Spencer's books. I took up Shaw, Anatole France, Turgenieff, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Verlaine, Ridpath's *History of the World*, Nordau's *Degeneration,* Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment*, Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, Renan's *Life of Jesus,* Carlyle, John Davidson's poems, Tennyson's poems. Both poets, I thought, were far below Swinburne. God Almighty, how I read!

"I'll get there yet," was my never-ending cry.

I looked for the message in every book that I read. I didn't skim through them. I got something out of everything that I read and I could feel my horizon broadening as I went along. I lived in a state of unalloyed interest and enthusiasm for learning. I had plumbed the depths, but now I was preparing to climb the heights. For three years I read prodigiously and then I went out into the world again to make another attempt at rehabilitation.

CHAPTER XIX

MEETING A MASTER IN GREENWICH VILLAGE

I WAS released from the Connecticut State Prison in the middle of January. A blizzard was raging the day I rambled through the gates to liberty. I didn't have enough clothes on me "to pad a crutch," but I was happy. My bank roll consisted of ten dollars which the State gave me for three years of hard labor. The Warden, a big-hearted fellow, wanted me to remain until spring.

"It looks like a tough winter, Jack," he said, "why don't y' stay till spring?"

Several members of the Christian Endeavor Society pleaded with me to stop in Wethersfield until spring. I received numerous offers of help.

"Stay until spring," they pleaded with me. "We'll see that you have board and room and clothes. We'll take care of you until spring, after which we'll find you employment on a farm or in one of the factories in Hartford."

My ambitions were along different lines. I wasn't seeking charity; I had no desire to become a farmer or a laborer in a factory. I thanked the well-meaning Christians for their gestures of generosity. They seemed disappointed because I didn't remain in Wethersfield and become "an odd-job man" until spring.

Heretofore when I left a stir the world invariably seemed strange and new to me. There was always a blur before my eyes, a feeling of fear and uncertainty and loneliness.

But no such feelings possessed me this time. Hell, no!

I had as much right in this world as anybody. I felt that I was in reality a necessary part of it. I had as much right and claim to a part of it as any other person in it and I was just as good as any other man. There was no blur before my eyes now, no fear, no uncertainty, no sense of loneliness. Instead of these things I had faith, courage and boundless

enthusiasm. I had a mind, an equipment, point of view, imagination.

"Somewhere in this man's world," I thought, "there is a place for me and I'm going to get it!"

I entertained absolutely no illusions that it would be easy to find my place in the world. I didn't think, as I had thought many times before, that I was going to have an easy time going up. No—I had a better understanding of life now. I knew that I was in for a tough battle and that I should probably meet many discouragements before I succeeded in rehabilitating myself. I didn't expect to have an easy time. I didn't expect to have men pat me on the shoulder and wish me well. As a matter of fact I anticipated the reverse, and prepared for it. I expected men to double-cross and stab me. And they did. I expected coppers to dog me. And they did. In a word I just looked forward to having a hell of a time. But I planned a defense to meet and circumvent all these attacks. I had never planned a defense before. They always caught me unawares, unprepared; therefore they had crushed me and sent me tobogganing back to defeat. I made up my mind they'd have a hell of a time crushing me now.

Defeat never entered my mind. That is, complete defeat never entered my mind. I expected reverses but not defeats, and I had concluded that every reverse I encountered would simply be an impetus to greater effort.

"They may put me on my back," I swore, "but I won't stay on my back. I'll get up."

So I began to beat my way back.

The coppers started to work on me in Hartford. They knew that I had been released from the stir that morning. They were waiting for me. I was picked up at the station while I was buying a ticket. In the old days I would have fought them to a finish, but now I was too smart to fight them. I knew I would be fighting a hopeless battle. I used my "bean."

"Well," I laughed, "what's up now?"

They began to abuse me. I continued to laugh at them.

"I'm off the grift," I said. "Some day you may be glad to know me. You'll never get me again, boys. Stealing is a sucker's racket."

"You'll be back in the stir within a month," they taunted me. "Once a crook always a crook."

"No," I replied, "never again. Wait and see."

They razzle-dazzled me until the train pulled in. Then they put me on the train.

"You can't stay in this town," they assured me. "This is no place for a guy with your record."

"No," I replied, "I know that. Good-by."

I had a hunch that they would wire the New York dicks that I was on my way to the city and of course I expected to be picked up when I landed in New York. But I mapped out a plan to beat them. I got off the train at Bridgeport and trolleyed into the city. I wanted to see George Carteret before the dicks grabbed me. And I wanted to see Helen. I had seen her only once within three years, though I had been receiving letters from her on an average of twice a week during those three years. Helen knew that I was coming. I had wired her. I had mapped out a speech for her family. I thought I would be able to win the family with that speech on my ambitions and plans for the future. Foolish boy!

The family, with the exception of her mother, gave me the air.

They strenuously objected to my entering their home.

"You've got one hell of a nerve to be calling on my sister," her eldest brother Tommy said. "Get out of here and don't ever come back."

The mother protested. Helen protested. I laughed inwardly.

The brothers threatened me with violence. I sat and listened. I was amused.

"They are magnificently human," I thought.

In the old days I would have been filled with self-disparagement, humility and meekness. I would have seen the brothers and sisters as superior persons and myself as a most unworthy social leper not fit to associate with them. No such ideas lingered in my mind now. I saw them as unmitigated fools, third-rate mediocrities, asses, pretenders. They were inferior to me, I thought at that time. I was above them even though I had a record as a crook. I didn't argue with them. I simply

tried to point out to them that they had been lucky while I had been unlucky.

"I never had the opportunities that you had," I said. "I was a crook merely because I didn't know how to think. I know how to think now, therefore I'm no longer a crook."

I tried to win them, but it was impossible. They asked me to stop coming to the house. Mom was a dear. She defended me.

"You may come here," she said; "it's my home. I bought it. Come whenever you feel like coming."

They repeated that they would throw me out if I ever entered the home again.

"I'll come again," I replied; "your mother has invited me. If you throw me out, I'll come in again."

What a delightful time I had that evening that I called on Helen!

The next day I saw George Carteret. George introduced me to the artists and writers on the *Sunday World* staff, all of whom had heard of me. They knew that I was an ex-bank burglar with a criminal record a mile long, but they didn't assume superior attitudes. Here was a gang of real, honest-to-goodness human beings, regular fellows, hail-fellows-well-met, to whom conventions and social barriers weren't worth a tinker's damn. If a man was a man they received him. If he wasn't a man he got the air. That *Sunday World* gang thrilled me with their reception.

"By God," I thought, "these guys are the goods!"

The *Sunday World* wanted to buy the story of my life. I was broke and needed the money, so I made a dicker with the *World*. Carteret selected one of his special writers, Eddie Smith, to write the story and away I went to Eddie's apartment in Greenwich Village to collaborate with him.

My life in the village was a revelation. I had never met such people. And please remember that I'm not referring to the fancy thinkers that dwell there to-day, the long-haired dreamers who are always on the verge of arriving, but never arrive. When I speak of the "people" that I met I refer to the men and women who have written their names on the scroll of fame. I met the salt of the earth in the village, newspaper men, artists and illustrators, writers and painters, dram-

atists, musicians and editors, the only people in this man's world worth knowing! The only people who ever received me as a human being! The only people I have ever loved! The only people who ever taught me anything!

Eddie Smith introduced me. Wherever I went I was welcomed with open arms. At first I didn't get them. They were so different. I couldn't understand why they were so big and fine.

Thy were not like the business men and the coppers and the Puritans and the small-town yaps with whom I had lived. My past didn't mean a damn thing to them—not in the way that it did to the business men, the coppers and the Puritans. The coppers dogged me because of the past, the Puritans and the business men sidetracked because of my past, but the people with the artistic flair said: Come on, brother, you're one of us. A bank burglar is a person worth knowing. A man who can rob a bank, beat prisons, endure punishment and then come back is a desirable companion. To hell with what you have been, we are only interested in what you are going to be. If you're a man with ideas, stick around. So I stuck.

One night Eddie told me that he was going to take me to the home of a great writer. I was shocked. I had visions of his giving me the air if he learned that I was an ex-crook, so I asked Eddie if he told Frank Harris that I was an ex-crook.

"He knows your history," Eddie replied. "Histories mean nothing to Frank. Nobody worth a damn condemns a man because he has been in prison."

Frank Harris lived on Washington Square a few doors above Fifth Avenue. He was one of the immortals and he had known and associated with many of the immortal band. He knew Oscar Wilde, Carlyle, Renan, Whistler, Verlaine, Walter Pater, and Herbert Spencer.

"I told Frank all about your history," Eddie said. "I told him how you liked Wilde and his *Life of Wilde*. He'll be interested in you and you'll like him."

"I'm going to shake hands with a man who knew Oscar Wilde and Herbert Spencer?" I gasped.

"None other than the great Frank Harris," Eddie grinned.

"Is he married?" I asked Eddie.

"Yes, he's married. Mrs. Harris is one of the finest women in the world. You'll like her, too."

On the way over to the Master's house I stopped at a florist's and bought a bouquet for Mrs. Harris. Carlo Edwards, a musician, Prosper Buranelli, a writer, and Bobbie Ament, an artist, friends of Harris, accompanied Eddie and me.

I was as nervous as could be when we entered the house and I was all reverence.

We were ushered into the parlor where the great writer was stretched out on a lounge. He arose and greeted Eddie, Carlo, Buranelli and Ament, after which Eddie introduced me.

My knees were knocking and when Mrs. Harris entered the room in the middle of Eddie's introduction I felt like dashing out of the house. I handed her the bouquet when Eddie introduced me. She smiled, thanked me for the bouquet and then said:

"Mr. Smith tells us that you've had an interesting career."

"Damn interesting, I should say," Harris's great booming voice reverberated through the room. I had never heard such a voice.

I was tongue-tied with admiration. My mouth had gone dry, but I managed to stammer:

"Yes, I have lived dangerously, as Nietzsche once said."

He straightened up, got up from the lounge when I mentioned Nietzsche's name.

"You've been reading Nietzsche?" A grin played around the corners of his mouth.

"Most all the German philosophers," I went on, "but Goethe is my favorite."

"Extraordinary, extraordinary," he grunted. "Have you read Heine?"

I admitted that I had never heard of Heine. He was surprised.

"Never heard of Heine?" he roared. "Ah," he sighed as he ran both hands over his head and raised his eyes to the ceiling, "you want to read Heine, my boy, you want to read Heine. He was a Master—a Master of wit and poetry; a lord of laughter and tears, a brave soldier in the Liberation War of humanity. Heine was one of the sacred band."

I sat there with my mouth and ears wide open, taking in every word. I was fascinated.

"Carlyle called him a dirty Jew pig," he went on, "but I rank him with the best; I could never understand Carlyle's opinion of Heine."

I hung on every word and when Eddie Smith interrupted the Master to ask a question, I felt like shouting:

"For Christ's sake, sit down, keep quiet, shut up."

"You're quite well informed," he said. "Where did you go to school?"

"I had approximately two years schooling," I replied. "I was working when I was a youngster."

"Only two years schooling?" He appeared surprised.

He was curious to know more about my history. He asked me question after question about my environment as a kid, my parents, my experiences in prisons, what I thought of prisons.

"One of the finest souls I ever knew served a term in prison," he said. "I'm referring to Paul Verlaine, the greatest Christian singer since Dante. Many fine men have been in prisons."

Then I turned inquisitor. I was curious to know more about Oscar Wilde. He told me how and where he had first met Wilde in London during the early eighties. He confessed that he didn't care much about him on the occasion of the first meeting, but after he got to know him better he changed his opinion.

"Oscar was a great fellow," he said, "a lord of language. He had an agile and powerful mind and he delighted in using it."

He told me some things about Wilde's life in prison after his run-in with the Marquis of Queensbury, his life after he came out of prison, his death.

"His happy humor was with him to the end," the Master said in speaking of Wilde's tragic finish. "He asked for champagne and when it was brought to him he smiled and declared that he was dying beyond his means."

The tears were streaming down my face. I had a mental picture of poor Wilde dying in poverty in Paris, heartbroken and sick of life.

"If I had only known him," I thought. "I would have gone

out and plundered a few banks for a guy like that. Too bad that I didn't know him; it would have been an honor to plunder banks for him."

"You've read a lot of Wilde, haven't you, Jack?" Carlo asked me.

"Everything that he ever wrote," I replied. "I've read the 'Ballad of Reading Gaol' a hundred times or more. I consider it one of the finest things in English, bar none."

The Master looked at me and smiled.

"I say," his voice boomed, "you're an extraordinary fellow and you ought to make your mark in the world. But don't forget that money isn't everything in life; there are more important things than money."

I didn't quite get him and I hesitated about asking him what he meant, but when I left the house I asked Eddie Smith what he meant. Eddie told me what he meant.

"It is better to have a liberated mind," he said.

"What a night, what a night I have spent," I thought. "If I die in the morning I can say that my life has not been wasted. I can say that I have lived one night with the gods!"

"Did you like him?" Eddie asked me.

"Did I like him?" I shot back. "I love him! He's a wonder. I'd like to spend about two years listening to him talk. It would be a treat. I'd like to be his servant for two years.

Eddie, Carlo, Bobbie and Prosper were amused at me.

"He's a great guy," Eddie said.

"Wonderful," Carlo declared.

"Nobody like him," Prosper sighed.

Before I left his house that night he invited me to lunch with him on the following day.

And what a time I had at that luncheon! His immense knowledge of life staggered me!

And yet he was so compellingly human and sympathetic, so genial and democratic. There was nothing pedantic about him, no poses, none of the actor, none of the characteristics of the business men with whom I had to do.

"This fellow is a torch bearer," I said to myself, "an Olympian. I would rather shine his shoes than sit at the table with the business man. He tells me something. He's an inspiration."

Frank Harris became an ideal and a tremendous influence. I was a better man after my chats with him. I was infinitely more curious, intellectually curious, after my chats with him than I had ever been before. No minister or priest ever stirred me as he stirred me. He sent strange thoughts sky rocketing through the corridors my mind.

He autographed and gave me several of his books—*The Man Shakespeare, Shakespeare and His Loves, Contemporary Portraits* and others. They were real possessions to me. I still have them. There isn't enough money in this man's world to buy them. I look at the date on them and say to myself:

"That's the date of my baptismal. On that date I began my pilgrimage after Beauty."

Goethe's phrase came back to me with more glory and splendor than ever before:

"The fashion of this world passeth away, I would fain occupy myself with that which endures."

CHAPTER XX

FIGHTING PREJUDICES

THE writing men of Greenwich Village, the artists, portrait painters, illustrators and musicians with whom I associated were a gang of gods in my opinion. I loved the life of the Village. It was rich and wonderful. The musicians talked about music that I had never heard; the writers talked about books I had never read; the artists talked about pictures I had never seen nor heard of. But every time I heard of a new book, I went prowling around until I found it and then I read it. Whenever the musicians talked about music I had never heard, I asked them questions about it and then I went to hear it at the next recital in Carnegie Hall.

One night Carlo Edwards and another musician were talking about Verdi and his music, Puccini, Leoncavallo and other composers. My mind went back to the night in the New England prison where I cried and sobbed like a baby when I heard the "Tannhäuser" Overture. I interrupted the discussion on Verdi, Puccini and Leoncavallo with questions about "Tannhäuser." I told them the story of how I reacted to the music.

"Tell me something about Wagner and the 'Tannhäuser' Opera," I pleaded.

Then Carlo rehearsed the story of the opera. He told me about the young minstrel Tannhäuser and Venus, how he gave up the fair Elizabeth for Venus, his remorse, his determination to return to her, his pilgrimage to Rome to obtain pardon from the Pope, the Pope's refusal, the blooming staff, Elizabeth's death, his grief.

The next evening I was standing in line at the Metropolitan Opera House waiting to purchase a ticket to hear "Tannhäuser." The rain began to come down in torrents, but I stood there, and as the rest of the men and women in the line ran to shelter I moved up to the head of the line. I got a seat

in the first row of the gallery and when the orchestra began the overture I thought my heart would break. Unconsciously I was muttering.

"Oh, Jesus! Oh, God! this is wonderful, beautiful!"

And there were moments when I couldn't say anything, though all sorts of beautiful visions were flashing across the horizon of my mind, visions that I couldn't interpret and couldn't understand; all I could do was cry and sob and mutter:

"Wonderful, beautiful! Jesus! this is wonderful!"

"Tannhäuser" tore me to pieces. The "Pilgrims' Chorus" brought back a flood of memories and the star song of Wolfram left me palpitant with bliss.

"Frank Harris was right," I said to myself on the way back to Eddie Smith's apartment in the village; "there are more important things in life than money."

Eddie had a book on Wagner's operas in his library. I grabbed the book and I never went to bed that night until I had read "Tannhäuser," "Lohengrin," "The Dusk of the Gods," "Parsifal," "The Meistersingers," "Tristan and Ysolde" and "The Flying Dutchman."

I was now mad about music. I haunted Carlo's apartment night and day. Carlo played Debussy's "The Sunken Cathedral" for me one night, a suavely beautiful thing that made me realize the pitiful inadequacy of words when I tried to transmute my feelings into speech. There was a mystical and sublime something in music that stirred me and filled me with a desire to interpret the emotions that it awoke in me, but I couldn't interpret them. I would spend hours at a time trying to put my thoughts and feeling on paper, but when I had finished, the impression lingered that I had done a poor job and that there was still a conflict and contradiction of my ideas of what it was in music that stirred me so profoundly.

Carlo laughed at me. He was both amused and puzzled.

"Say," he said to me time and again, "I think this talk about your being an ex-bank burglar is bunk." Then he would shake his head and say: "I don't get you, I don't get you. You're a wonder."

In fact very few people got me. The average man's idea of the crook was a rough and tough looking individual with

scalps dangling at his belt, a dese, dem and dose lowbrow with utterly no understanding of life and no capacity of appreciation for the beauties of life. This was the business man's idea of an ex-crook, the Puritan's idea and the idea of other little half-baked men and women that I had met while I was trying to go up. I do not refer to the police. They have already classified themselves! There was a time when I couldn't understand the point of view of the police, but now I do understand. They were cruel because they were stupid. Cruelty and stupidity go hand in hand.

One night Carlo invited me to a well-known society woman's home for dinner. He told me that he had given her my history and that she had expressed a desire to meet me. So I went along. She was one of those charmingly artificial ladies and yet she was a generous soul.

"You don't look like a bank burglar," she said to me.

"And what, may I inquire,"—I laughed at her,—"did you think a bank burglar looked like."

"Well," she smiled, "I certainly never entertained the idea that he looked like a gentleman or that he acted like one."

"I may fool you before the evening's over," I laughed.

She thought it the most astounding thing that I should love music, good books, paintings and various works of art. She expected me to eat with my knife, drink with the spoon in the cup, yodel the soup, murder "the king's English" and talk about the *Police Gazette.*

"It is possible for a man to be a gentleman and a bank burglar at the same time," I assured her.

She agreed with me.

I met some very nice people through Mrs. Darlington, one of whom, a Mrs. Tompkins, was very much interested in prison work. Mrs. Tompkins was a widow. Her husband had died a year or two before I was introduced to her, leaving her quite a comfortable fortune. She was a wonderful woman in many ways. She was fairly young, around thirty, she was good to look at, cultured, a lady to her finger tips.

Mrs. Tompkins was interested in me. She volunteered to help me. I thanked her and told her that I didn't need help:

"I'll get along," I said; "I'm just feeling my way now. When I get my bearings I'll go up like a skyrocket."

I told her I was ambitious for a career, but that I had not decided just what sort of career I should go after.

"Well," she began to work on me, "it seems to me that you owe a duty to the men and women that you left in prison; you owe a duty to all the unfortunate men and women in the prisons of this country to-day. Did you ever think of entering the missionary field?"

"As a preacher?" I was all set to shoot a little of Spencer's philosophy at her.

"No," she went on, "as a lecturer. Now I know where an excellent moving picture depicting terrible prison conditions can be bought for a reasonable amount of money. It has occurred to me that you and that picture could make people think and thus bring about a reform in prison management. I know that you could do a lot of good."

Her idea appealed to me.

"Fine," I said, "but where do you come in on the financial end and where do I come in?"

She said she wasn't interested in making any money out of the venture, that she would foot all the bills, that she was only concerned about making the people of this country think about the deplorable prison conditions.

"I'll buy the picture," she said, "hire a press agent, a moving-picture operator and a booking agent to get up a route. If the scheme is a success you can pay me for the picture when you have laid away a little money."

So I began my career as a lecturer. I got my first lesson on how some of those yellow-hearted Broadway parasites made their living. The agent she employed booked me in some of the finest one-horse burgs that ever decorated the American continent, burgs of one and two and three thousand population where one couldn't separate the natives from a dollar without the aid of a jimmy or a gun. The lecturing tour was a frost absolutely. Worse still, I was stricken with neuritis and I lay in a hospital in the South for three months. Mrs. Tompkins was killed in an automobile accident while I was in the hospital.

I returned to New York broke and sick and just a little bit discouraged. Eddie Smith took me in. He fed me and en-

couraged me, paid the doctor's bills and the drug bills. Helen came and nursed me back to health.

These were the only bad breaks that I had experienced since my release from the Connecticut prison, but, as I soon learned, there were other slams waiting for me along the trail.

Helen's puritanized brothers and sisters were still violently opposed to her having any relationship "with that dirty crook." I recall that my second visit to her home occurred on Christmas Eve.

"On this day of days," I thought, "they'll be charitable, they'll have a little of the spirit of Christ in their hearts to-day. I may be able to talk with them to-day."

Everybody in the home was preparing to attend the midnight Mass. Helen had asked me to go with her and while the Mass didn't mean a thing to me I went to please her.

The brothers and sisters gave me a wide berth. None of them came near me to extend the season's greetings. As they moved about the house they slammed the doors after them. Now and then I heard:

"That crook is back here again."

I found myself making comparisons, comparing the reception that I received at Frank Harris's house, at the homes of Mrs. Darlington and Mrs. Tompkins, with the reception at Helen's home.

Still I didn't say anything and I think my attitude aggravated them, for the doors were being slammed harder than ever and the exclamations "that crook is here again" came more frequently than before.

Eventually Eddie came into the parlor and began to denounce me:

"I told you that we didn't want you in our home," he snorted defiantly.

"I just dropped in to wish you all a Merry Christmas," I grinned at him and offered my hand. "It seems to me that on this day of days everybody in the world should be happy and charitable."

He made no offer to take my hand. He continued to talk about my calling.

"Good God," I went on, "I'm not a social leper just because I have sinned. Nobody's going to contract a disease. Why

not be manly and let bygones be bygones and judge me by what I expect to do and not what I have done. Some day I expect to prove myself worthy of your sister."

"Don't come here again," he shouted as he turned and walked out of the room.

Helen and I went to Mass. The family had a pew in the church. Helen suggested that we take seats in the family pew, to which I objected because I had a hunch that they, the brothers and sisters, would get up and leave the pew if I entered it. Of course their getting up wouldn't annoy me very much. I was only considering the feelings of Helen and her mother. I didn't want to embarrass them. She insisted that they "wouldn't dare to do such a thing in a church," but I was sure that they would dare anything.

"You go with your mother," I said, "I'll take a seat in the rear of the church."

"No," she insisted, "come with us."

So I went. Down the aisle I marched like a soldier. The church was jammed with worshipers; some were on their knees, some were sitting, some were standing. The altars were banked with flowers and ablaze with candles, while high above the main altar where the Mass was to be celebrated a huge star shone with a pyrotechnic brilliancy. To the left of the main altar there was a scene depicting the birth of the Christ Child in the manger of the stable at Bethlehem. This panorama thrilled me ten or twelve years back, but on this particular day I simply looked. My mood was not religious.

Down the aisle I marched as I looked. Finally we arrived at the family pew. Helen and her mother were a step or two ahead of me. The brothers and sisters saw us coming. Eddie reached for his hat.

"Don't move," I said, "I'm not going to sit in the pew."

They were preparing to get up when I kept on down the aisle. Helen followed me. She was scarlet. The mother entered the pew. Helen and I sat on chairs in front of the altars.

I wanted to laugh.

"I wonder why such people come to church," I mused. "Their God preaches sympathy. The morality of Jesus was all sympathy. Their Bible says do good for evil. Christ was

supposed to have died for sinners and yet these people scorn me, a sinner."

I didn't pray. I didn't kneel. I was in a rebellious mood. When the organ and the choir began the "Adeste Fidelis" I hummed the hymn. That was the only part of the services that gave me a kick and I heaved a sigh of relief.

Helen took me to task for failing to kneel and pray.

"I thought you were a Catholic?" she cried.

"I was one," I replied, "but now I know better."

"Jack,"—her voice was husky,—"you don't mean to say that you have given up God, that you don't believe in the church, do you?"

"I believe in God," I answered, "but the Church, so far as I am concerned, is impossible. I can't embrace what the Church teaches."

Her eyes filled up with tears. I saw at once that I had hurt her and I was filled with remorse.

"I guess your friends in Greenwich Village, Mr. Harris, Silas Bent and Ed Smith have taken you away from the Church." She looked me in the eyes.

"No," I said to her, "they had nothing to do with it. I had changed long before I met Smith or Harris."

"Well," she sighed, "I could never marry an atheist."

I tried to point out to her that I was not an atheist, that there was a big difference between agnosticism and atheism. I quoted Herbert Spencer to her and Huxley and Darwin.

"You think those men know more about God than the priests?" she gasped.

She hadn't read Spencer, Darwin or Huxley. She had heard of them through the priests. They were "infidels," men whom one should despise. They "were doomed for hell fire," and so on.

"I'll never marry a man who doesn't believe in God," she said.

"What have my convictions about the things that the Church teaches got to do with my love for you?" I argued. "Or your love for me?"

"If you love me," she said, "you'll go to confession and communion with me. I won't believe that you love me until you do."

"I love you with all my heart and soul," I pleaded; "you know that. I have loved you since the first day I saw you on the boat. I adore you, but I don't understand why you want me to sacrifice my honest convictions. What have my convictions about religion got to do with my great love for you?"

She said she couldn't be happy with a man who didn't believe what the Church taught and that she wouldn't marry me unless I changed my opinions about the Church.

"Then," I said to her, "your love for me isn't very strong."

She protested that she loved me, that she had never loved another man. The more we argued the question the farther we drifted apart.

The sisters and brothers had observed my actions at the midnight Mass. They had noticed that I didn't kneel or pray and immediately they began to brand me "atheist" and "infidel." They slammed the doors harder than ever when I visited the home and talked about me more abusively than ever. The mother, a dear soul, talked with me for hours at a time about religion. She said that the family would never entertain the thought of my marrying Helen so long as I was an atheist. I tried to show Mom that there was a vast difference between atheism and agnosticism, but she couldn't see the difference.

Helen loved me. I knew that. I also knew that she would probably marry me when the time came regardless of what my convictions were, but I saw that she was terribly unhappy and that her mother was unhappy and that the sisters and brothers were delighted. The brothers and sisters had something to talk about now. And they talked. Right and left they circulated the most outrageous stories about Helen and me.

"Being an ex-crook," they said, "is not so bad, but being an infidel is the limit."

"Well," I finally concluded, "I'll stop all this talk. I'll do what Helen says. I'll go to confession and communion. I'll try to embrace the doctrines of the Church; then maybe they'll receive me as a prospective brother-in-law."

So I went to confession. The priest who heard my confession was astounded. He had never heard such a confession before. It was the first in thirteen years and it took me ap-

proximately an hour to get through it. I told everything. I went into detail about the banks I had robbed and what I did with the money, the efforts to rehabilitate myself and so on. We got along all right until His Reverence asked me what made me decide to live differently. When I told him that Herbert Spencer had given me the first flash at the wonders and beauty of life and the first angle on the necessity of an equipment before I could succeed in life, he began to lay me out. He said I shouldn't read Spencer any more, that he "was a bad influence," that God had created the world, that I had a soul and that I would never succeed unless I placed my faith and trust in God.

Helen and her mother were waiting for me in the church. They probably didn't think that I would go through with the confession when I threw up the sponge and said that I was willing to change my convictions, so they went to the church with me.

I looked over at her when I came out of the confessional. She was on her knees praying. Her face lighted up with an angelic smile and right then and there I saw that this thing I just had done was worth while. I thought of Dante's phrase about the soul of man coming from the hand of God weeping and laughing like a little child; I had read that in Wilde's "De Profundis."

I went on my knees beside Helen and her mother. I looked at Helen now and then as I prayed. There were tears in her eyes and presently there were tears in mine. The next morning, Sunday, she and I received communion together and on the way home we talked about the sisters and brothers. They had seen Helen and me go to the altar for communion. I anticipated a friendly greeting when I met them in the house after church.

But there was no change. They slammed the doors. They never came near me. They were still the same old Puritans and I was still "that dirty crook."

"Why do they go to church?" I mused. "Why do they pray? They ask God to forgive their sins and yet they are not willing to forgive me for what I have been."

I was gradually losing the ability to laugh at these things. It was almost like laughing at a soul in pain. I had never

encountered such hard-hearted, stubborn fools. I was utterly disgusted with them now, disgusted with myself for having ever considered the idea that they were worth knowing.

"To hell with them," I thought. "I'm through trying to win them."

Helen and her mother had a terrible time with them. They were tireless in their efforts to split up Helen and me. They resorted to all kinds of dirty tricks. To all the family connections, near and far, they circulated the story of my past and when they didn't succeed in persuading either Helen or her mother that I was rotten to the core and beyond hope and unworthy of support or sympathy, they grew desperate and went to the police.

One day a letter came to the home addressed to Helen's mother. It was from the office of the head of the detective bureau.

"Will you please call at my office to-morrow morning at ten o'clock?" it read. "I have some very valuable information to impart to you."

The letter was signed by an inspector in charge of the detective bureau. The Inspector was a very good friend of a certain clergyman who visited Helen's home. Helen and her mother got in touch with me as soon as they received the letter. They were alarmed. I laughed when I read the letter. I knew what was coming.

"Somebody," I told them, "has solicited the help of the genial Inspector and the genial Inspector thinks that he will be able to tell you many things about my history that you don't already know."

"Shall we go see him?" the mother asked me.

"By all means," I advised them. "I have told you all about my life. I haven't hidden anything. Go see the Inspector."

So the following morning they went to headquarters to see the head of the detective bureau.

"I have learned," the Inspector began, "that a notorious crook, one of the worst crooks that ever lived, is visiting your home, a man by the name of Jack Kelly, alias Jack Callahan, alias Frank Howard, alias James Moran, alias Tom Reilly, alias 'The Rambler,' etc., etc., etc.; is that so?"

"We know a Mr. Kelly," the mother replied.

"I hear this man is engaged to marry your daughter; is that so?" the Inspector asked.

Both Helen and her mother told the genial Inspector that he had been correctly informed.

Then he began to recite my record and exhibit photographs of yours truly in the middle of which Helen, interrupted him saying:

"Mr. Kelly has told me all that. I knew all about his history long ago. He hasn't hidden anything from me or my mother. I'm engaged to be married to Mr. Kelly. I——"

"What!" the Inspector gasped. "He has told you all about his criminal career?"

"He told us a year or two ago," the mother cut in.

"And you're going to permit this man to marry your daughter?" he grunted.

"My daughter loves him and he loves her. Furthermore," the mother went on, "I see no reason why the man should be condemned simply because he has been a criminal."

At this point Helen began to denounce the sleuth.

"I don't thank you a bit for calling me to your office," she declared, "to tell me these things about Mr. Kelly. I love him and I'm going to marry him regardless of what you or anybody else says about him."

Love triumphed; Helen and I were closer and dearer to each other than ever before.

It was along about this time that I began to entertain serious ideas about a career. I wanted to succeed in a big way. I was, I think, inordinately ambitious. I wanted to be a big man, a doer of things out of the ordinary. I wanted to convince these coppers and Puritans that I was far above them, mentally, and every other way.

"Some day," I swore, "these coppers and Puritans will come to me with their hats in their hands. Some day they'll be glad to know me."

I discussed my plans with Eddie Smith, Silas Bent and George Carteret.

"I think I'll try the automobile business," I said. "I'll start in at the bottom and try to go to the top."

Silas and Eddie thought the automobile business was a good field for me.

"Why not write a letter to Mr. Ford of the Ford Motor Company?" Silas suggested.

"Ford is a great guy," Eddie said; "he's interested in ex-convicts, has given hundreds of them employment. If you can get in with him, Jack, you'll be all right."

So we framed a letter to Mr. Ford, giving him a synopsis of my career and ambitions.

We received a discouraging reply a few days later.

"We have no vacancies at present," the secretary wrote, "but we'll keep Mr. Kelly in mind."

Then I decided to go to Detroit.

"I'll get a job in some automobile plant," I thought. "Surely there must be an opening out there somewhere."

Helen didn't relish the idea of my leaving New York, but I was determined to go.

"I must begin," I tried to console her. "I'm going out there to carve a career that will make your sisters and brothers blush with shame, and when I have made good I'm coming back to marry you."

CHAPTER XXI

A CHANCE TO MAKE GOOD

AN hour after my arrival in Detroit I was in the "line-up" at police headquarters, listening to the chief detective recite my history to the masked coppers. I was picked up in the Michigan Central Railroad Station when I got off the train. When the chief finished telling the coppers who I was, what I had been and what I had done, he ordered me out of town.

"I'll give you an hour to git out of town," he said, "and if yer not out in an hour I'll vag you."

When he said he would "vag" me, he meant that he would prefer charges of vagrancy against me and send me to the workhouse for thirty, sixty or ninety days.

"Chief," I replied, "I came here to look for a job. I am through with the underworld. I haven't done a crooked thing in a year. I just want a chance to live and I'll appreciate it if you'll give me that chance."

"Listen," he roared like a lion, "don't hand me that junk about looking fer a job. I tell you that you've got to hike out of this town and you better hike out quick."

"I'm looking for a job," I protested, "and what's more I'm going to stay right here in this town until I get it, vag or no vag."

"Oh," his eyes flashed fire, "so you're one of them fellers that thinks he can tell the police what he can do, eh?"

"No," I answered, "I'm not. I'm simply one of those fellows who knows that he is entitled to a chance to make a living and I'm going to fight for that chance regardless of what you or any other man may say."

I was tired running away from coppers, I was determined to stand pat and fight for what belonged to me. I pointed out to him that I was entitled to an even break. I appealed to the man in him and he eventually responded.

"Well," he concluded, "if yer on the level, stay; but git this, old-timer, and don't ferget it. The first time yer seen with a grifter or in a joint where grifters hang out, yer going to be railroaded. Git me?"

I told him I understood, whereupon he put me in the line-up again.

"Boys," he spoke to the coppers, "this fellow says he's trying to go straight. I've decided to give him a chance. That order about his leaving town has been canceled; but if you see him with grifters or in any of the hang-outs of grifters, pick him up."

"Victory number one," I mused. "I made this rough-neck surrender."

So out I started to find a job. First of all I engaged a room for which I paid five dollars a week. Then I bought a meal ticket good for twenty-one meals for which I paid five dollars. I bought an alarm clock and a few other necessary knickknacks.

Promptly at six-thirty the morning following my arrival in Detroit I was in line at the employment office of the Hudson Motor Company. I had made up my mind that I wouldn't conceal my history, that I would get a job strictly on my merits, that I wouldn't resort to any sort of misrepresentation.

"It's best to tell them who I am," I concluded, "because it will leak out anyway."

"Good morning," I greeted the employment manager, "anything doing this morning?"

"Sit down," he offered me a chair, "got a trade, ever work in an automobile plant before?"

I told him I was not a mechanic and that I had never worked in an automobile plant before, but that I was ambitious to learn the business and dead willing to start in at anything for any amount of money.

"Sounds good," he grabbed an application blank. "Name?"

I gave him my name, after which he asked me for references. When I told him that I had never worked, he wheeled around in his chair, glared at me and snapped:

"You never worked. I don't get you."

"I'm an ex-convict," I murmured. "I just came out of prison."

The interview ended right then. He got up and opened the door:

"I'm sorry," he said in a matter-of-fact tone; "nothing doing."

This was my first rebuff, but it didn't discourage me.

I went to the Star Automobile plant. I met with the same reception there.

"We don't hire crooks," the employment manager said.

I visited five automobile plants that day and every one of them gave me the air when I said I was an ex-convict.

I went to the library that night and read a little of Anatole France's second volume, "On Life and Letters." I lingered on his chapter labeled "Criminals." He touched on Sophocles' tragedy, King Œdipus, which I had read many times, and he quoted what Jocasta said to Œdipus "when she had pierced through the mystery of that blinded man's destiny":

"'Unhappy—' she said, 'that is the only name with which I can name you and I shall never give you another.'"

"Humane and prudent thought!" the great Frenchman declared.

I read on:

"It is nature herself that teaches crime. How can we avoid recognizing it?" he wrote. "Animals kill their like to devour them, or from a jealous fury, or without any motive. There are many criminals among them. The ferocity of ants is terrible; female rabbits often devour their young; wolves, whatever one may say, eat one another; female orang-outangs have been seen to kill a rival. These are crimes; and if the poor beasts that commit them are not responsible, then nature must be accused; she has in truth attached too many miseries to the condition of men and animals."

I was in a thoughtful mood that night; I wasn't exactly discouraged, but I certainly was lonely and unhappy.

"I wonder," I said to myself as I sat there in the library, "if I shall be able to find one business man in this city who will take a chance with me. I wonder if all of them are cruel and skeptical. If I could only find one business man with Jocasta's philosophy, some big, broad-gauged fellow who would take me in and say—'you unfortunate and unhappy

man, what a terrible life you have lived. But come, my dear friend, I will help you find happiness and peace; I will give you the opportunity to work and live.' "

The inexorable cruelty of men almost sickened me. Everywhere I went I was informed that they didn't employ ex-convicts.

"Go to Ford's," they invariably told me, "he's a nut on employing ex-crooks; see him, he'll give y' a job."

I walked the streets of Detroit for two weeks, knocking on the gates of the factories of the Captains of Industry actually begging for a chance to work and live, and I couldn't get it because I was an ex-convict!

On more than one occasion I felt like quitting and going back to the underworld again, but whenever this feeling took hold of me I thought of Helen and her family.

"If I quit," I thought, "they'll be tickled to death. The Puritans will rejoice in my failure. The coppers will say 'I told you so, once a crook always a crook.' "

But I was more concerned about my friends in the Village. I didn't want to disappoint them. They were gambling on me, betting that I would come through, and by God, I was determined to go through! The moments of depression were short-lived. I pushed on with a bulldog determination. Every rebuff cut me until I bled; nevertheless I plugged along until I finally landed.

I had made the rounds of every automobile plant in Detroit. There was one left and that was Ford. I had the letter from his secretary in my pocket, telling me that there was no chance at that time, but that they would keep me in mind. I telephoned the secretary one afternoon about four o'clock.

I gave him my name. He didn't recall it.

"I'm John Kelly," I said, "I'm from New York. Mr. Smith of the New York *World* wrote a letter to Mr. Ford about me."

"Oh, yes," he replied, "now I remember you, Mr. Kelly."

"I've been here two weeks looking for work," I went on, "nobody will give me a chance. I'll work at anything for anything. Please give me a job."

He began to tell me that they were still filled up, but I interrupted him:

"Please give me a chance," I pleaded. "If I could tell you my story you would give me a chance."

"Well," he laughed, "you're certainly persistent, Mr. Kelly—suppose you come out and see me at five o'clock. Maybe there's an opening somewhere."

I hung up the receiver and shouted with joy. I was never so happy. Promptly at five I called at the Ford Motor Company office headquarters.

The clerk at the information desk handed me a form to fill out, stating whom I wanted to see and the nature of my business. I told him that I was there by appointment and that Mr. Ford's secretary was expecting me. I was ushered into his office immediately.

He greeted me cordially.

"Gosh," he said, "you don't look much like a bank burglar, Mr. Kelly."

I laughed.

"Sit down," he handed me a cigar, "and tell me something about yourself."

I rehearsed my history and my efforts to rehabilitate myself. He was interested. He was sympathetic. In the midst of our chat Mr. Ford entered the office. The secretary introduced me. Then he told Mr. Ford about my career.

"A bank burglar?" the motor magnate grinned from ear to ear as he looked me over from head to feet. "Why he looks more like a first-rate business man than a bank burglar."

He had a wonderful face. There was sympathy and understanding written all over it and there was a warm friendly glitter in his fine expressive eyes. There was nothing about him that suggested the big man. He was absolutely unassuming, as natural as could be and as congenial as could be. He made me feel at ease.

"How many banks have you robbed, son?" He was still smiling.

"Thirty or forty," I replied.

"Get much money?"

"About a quarter of a million," I said.

"Spent all of it, I suppose?"

I admitted that I had spent all of it.

Then he asked me all sorts of questions. He wanted to

know where I was born, how I began to steal, what prisons I had been in and so on.

"The old story," he remarked pensively; "a bad home, bad environment, bad food."

He never took his eyes off me for a moment.

"And now you want work, eh?"

"Yes, sir, I want work," I answered. "I want to begin at the bottom and go up to the top. I don't care how hard the work is or what you pay me. All I desire is a chance to prove that I can make good."

"Of course you can make good," he said. "You've got a good brain. Your brain is just as good as the other fellow's and you can go just as far as the other fellow if you're not afraid of hard work."

I hastened to assure him that I was not afraid of hard work.

"I've helped a lot of bad boys," he went on. "I like to help men who have been down in their luck. Some of them have fooled me, but most of them have measured up in fine style. Work is the salvation of the man who is down in the gutter. God never made such a thing as a man who wouldn't work. Work is a great thing. A man sleeps and eats better after a hard day's work. He enjoys life. Son," he leaned over and patted me on the shoulder, "I'm going to give you a chance to work and be happy. Your past history will not be held against you in my factory. You will have the same chance that every one of my men have. You will be treated the same in every way. I will not show you any favors. I will give you a job and it all depends on yourself whether you stay on that job all your life or work yourself into a bigger one."

The tears were trickling down my face.

"Raybold," he spoke to his secretary, "call Pete Marlin in. I want to turn this boy over to Pete."

Pete Marlin was the factory superintendent. When Pete entered the office Mr. Ford introduced me.

"Another one of my boys, Pete," he began, "who wants to work. Take him out and show him around and find a place for him and keep your eyes on him. I think he's going to make a good man for us."

"Fine looking fellow," Pete smiled at me.

"Don't look much like a safe cracker, does he, Pete?" Mr. Ford was still smiling.

"I should say not," Pete laughed.

I thanked Mr. Ford and assured him that I would deliver the goods.

"I know you will," he got up and shook hands with me, "I know a man when I see one. Now go to it, son, and let's see what you can do."

I felt like throwing my arms around his neck and kissing him. His sympathy and generosity and good nature won me heart and soul.

Pete Marlin took me into his office in the factory. Pete, as everybody called him, had been with Mr. Ford for ten or fifteen years. He was with the motor magnate when he first began to build his car in a little shop in the South End of Detroit. "The Old Man" was Pete's god. Indeed "The Old Man" was the god of every employee in the plant, I soon learned. And they gave substantial evidence of their regard for "The Old Man." They worked for him as no other gang of employees in Detroit worked for their employers.

And Pete was the counterpart of his boss in many ways.

"The Old Man," he said to me when we got in his office, "is a great fellow, we all love him. He likes to help fellows who have come out of prison. He likes to help everybody. He likes to see people happy and he believes in paying his men well for a hard day's work."

Pete Marlin talked with me until long after the day shift had left the factory and when I left him he ordered me to report for work at six-thirty the following morning. I was a happy man that night. I wrote letters to Helen, Eddie Smith, Silas Bent, and all my friends in New York, telling them of good fortune and my reception at the hands of the great Mr. Ford.

At six-thirty the next morning I was at the factory with my overalls under my arm.

Marlin called in one of the departmental heads and introduced me.

"One of Mr. Ford's boys," he told the foreman. "The

Old Man wants him to learn the business from the ground up. Start him in right, Bob, and see that he gets an even break, but no favors."

My brain was in a whirl as I walked through the factory with "Bob." The panorama bewildered me. Huge cranes were flying through the air carrying cargoes of iron and steel. Furnaces blazed in the "heat-treat department." Gigantic dynamos roared and hummed. Overhead "conveyors" carried stock from one man to the other. The machines were pounding like mad, pounding with an insistent and almost faultless rhythm that thrilled me rather than jarred me. Everywhere I looked there were belts and wheels whirling with a lightning rapidity and men, thousands of them, bent over the machines pulling out and putting in stock with a clocklike regularity. I marveled at the brain of the man who had organized and was directing all this power, human and mechanical. The scene dazzled me!

Bob put me to work in the front axle department on a spindle body threading machine. The "straw boss," a hard boiled, thick-headed Irishman, taught me how to run the machine. Within an hour my hands were bleeding from contact with the razor edge slivers of steel that came off the machine's spindle body. The "straw boss" had cautioned me about this, had showed me how to hold the stock so that it wouldn't cut my hands, but I didn't get him, so I was bleeding like a stuck pig. The "straw boss" was an excellent mechanic, but what he didn't know about handling men would fill a book and he proceeded to bawl me out for not holding the stock as he had advised me to hold it.

"I thought—" I began to explain, when he interrupted me:

"Now, listen," he roared, "yer not supposed to think. I'll do the thinking."

That seemed like a foolish remark to me.

"Not supposed to think?" I exclaimed.

"No, yer not," he went on. "I do the thinking, you do the woik."

That crack worried me. It seemed to me that it was only by thinking that I could get an idea of manufacturing processes, so that night I went to Pete Marlin's office and told him what the "straw boss" said.

"He told you that you were not supposed to do any thinking?" Pete gasped.

"Yes," I replied; "he said I was employed to work and that he had been hired to do the thinking for me."

"Well, I'll be damned," Pete said. "I want to talk with that fellow right away."

Pete sent one of his office boys to bring the "straw boss."

"Did you tell this man that he wasn't supposed to do any thinking, that he had been hired to work and not think?"

The "straw boss" admitted that he had.

"Well, now listen to me carefully," Pete began, "and don't forget what I say. This factory wants every man in it to think. No one man in this factory is responsible for what it is to-day. No one man ever thought out all the manufacturing processes that we have here. This factory as you see it to-day is the net result of the thoughts of hundreds of men. I wouldn't be here twenty-four hours if everybody stopped thinking. You wouldn't have a job if nobody did any thinking but you. Don't ever tell a man that you will do all the thinking, because you might not be able to think. Make all your men think and your job will be a hundred per cent easier."

So I began to do a lot of thinking as I worked on the various machines. The first week that I worked I nearly died. My hands were sore. My feet and back were sore. I was so sore from head to foot that I could hardly get out of bed in the morning. But how I ate and slept! I had the appetite of an elephant and I slept on an average of eleven hours every night. I went to bed at seven and got up at six.

One day I offered a suggestion to the "straw boss." I had observed that the stock which I was machining was transported from my machine down to the other end of the department for another "operation" and then brought back to the man at the next machine from me for still another operation.

"That doesn't look right to me," I thought. "That stock is being handled twice, whereas it should be handled only once if that machine down at the other end of the department was put in between me and the fellow who works on the part after I have finished it."

So I called the "straw boss's" attention to the route that the stock covered.

"Why don't you put that machine here," I suggested, "and eliminate that second handling?"

He couldn't see my idea at all, whereupon I drew a sketch of the department indicating the position of all the machines and the routing of the stock. I pointed out in the sketch that the stock was being handled twice. I suggested that the machine at the other end of the department should be moved, thereby eliminating the second handling and consequently increasing production. I sent the sketch with my comments to Pete Marlin. The next day Pete sent for me.

"That's a damn good suggestion," he said to me. "It will save time and money."

"The straw boss couldn't see it," I told Marlin, "but I was convinced that I was right; therefore I sent it to you."

"He couldn't see it?" Pete roared. "Couldn't see this idea?"

"No," I said, "I offered him the suggestion and he turned it down."

"Well," Pete leaned back in his chair and laughed, "I think I'll give you his job and give him yours."

My first promotion. I was thrilled to death. I had been in the factory six months and I was a "straw boss." My salary went up from five dollars a day to six.

I wrote the good news to Helen and Eddie Smith and the rest of my friends in New York, telling them that I had been promoted.

My troubles began with the promotion. The horny-handed sons of toil began to talk about me. Day in and day out I heard "crook, ex-convict." I said nothing to the boys who talked about me while I was in the factory. I did all my talking to them after working hours. I took them one by one and tried to show them that it was an unmanly, unfair thing to talk about me.

"I want to be friends with all you boys," I argued, "but we can't be friends if you're going to be rats."

Now and then I had to do battle with some narrow-gauged young man, but most of them saw my point of view and stopped talking about me.

CHAPTER XXII

WORKING IN THE FORD PLANT

THAT first year in Detroit was the happiest of my life. Success, in my opinion, was nothing more than a state of mind. I had reduced it to that formula. Success consisted in knowing first of all where I was going, how to get there and what would be required to remain after I had arrived at the goal of my destination. I looked back over my first year's progress. I had started in at $2.72 per day. I was now a departmental foreman earning $2000 a year. That was good, I thought, but not quite good enough. There was Pete Marlin earning around $75,000 a year. There were a dozen or more executives earning from $5,000 to $50,000 a year.

"There's no reason in the world," I decided, "why I can't get one of those jobs that pay twenty, thirty or fifty thousand a year. There's no reason in the world why I can't get Pete Marlin's job."

I was terribly ambitious. Furthermore, I was constructively ambitious; I didn't dream. I sat down and analyzed myself, listed my assets and liabilities.

"Those fellows are getting big money because they know their jobs from the ground up. They're producers," I mused, "they can tell other men what to do and how to do it."

I began to equip myself for one of those big jobs. I took up the study of principles of organization, manufacturing, cost accounting, plant layouts, books on efficiency, blue prints. I studied all the time. I was the first man in the factory in the morning and the last one out at night. I had been associating with some of the "big fellows" and I had weighed them up. I was constantly comparing myself with them. After I had talked with them, I would go home and sit down and analyze them. They didn't know anything about the books that I had read. They didn't know as much about

music as I knew. They hadn't read Spencer, France, Shaw, Swinburne, Wilde, Ridpath. They had never heard a Beethoven symphony. They had never heard an opera.

"Hell," I would say to myself, "I've got it all over these fellows. I've got a better brain than they. They know more about handling men and building automobiles than I do, but I'll learn what there is to be learned about those things and when I do I'll go by them like a gale of wind."

The old inferiority complex had gone. I no longer looked at those big guns with admiring eyes. I was able to do what they had done. They didn't thrill me like the writing men I had known back in New York. They had more of this world's goods than the writing men, but by God the writing men could talk about things that these manhandlers had never heard!

So while I studied organization, manufacturing, and the handling of men, I didn't neglect my books and my music. I never forgot what Frank Harris said to me:

"Don't forget that money isn't everything in life; there are more important things than money."

Money was everything with these automobile men. I was determined that it wouldn't represent everything to me. I wanted money and position so that I could go back to New York and marry Helen and make her brothers and sisters curl up with envy and humiliation. I wanted to convince everybody, particularly the cold-blooded coppers who had hounded and dogged me from stem to stern, that I was a great fellow.

Such a thing as failure never entered my mind. No sir! My contact with the "big fellows" convinced me that success was inevitable. They were a revelation to me in many, many ways. I no longer considered them geniuses and intellectual giants and supermen. These "big fellows" were astonishingly dull and stupid. All those "big fellows" interpreted success in terms of dollars and cents, huge, gaudily furnished mansions in which to live, automobiles, servants, jewelry, luxuries. I seldom saw any of them at the Detroit Symphony concerts or at the opera when the Chicago Opera Company came to town once a year for a series of three or four performances. But now and then I heard about the Bacchanalian revels that

they staged for a gang of show girls when the Follies appeared in Detroit and now and then I heard of how some of the theatrical gold-diggers had put the works on several of the big boys.

One night I attended a Wagnerian concert. I saw one of the "big fellows" there. He looked at me, bowed and smiled. There was an expression of astonishment on his face, an expression which seemed to say: "Well, well, what are you doing here? Surely you don't love music, do you?"

The "Tannhäuser" Overture was the last selection prior to the intermission. During the intermission Bill met me in the lobby. I was still under the spell of that gigantic and soul-stirring overture when he came up and spoke to me:

"You like music?" he asked me.

I told him I was a great lover of Wagner.

He was surprised.

I was wiping the tears out of my eyes.

"Yes," I said, "Wagner's music thrills me to death."

"I don't get it at all," he confessed. "It's all Greek to me, but my wife and daughter are crazy about it. Personally I would rather sit in on a good musical comedy."

"Didn't you care for the 'Tannhäuser' Overture?" I asked him.

"No," he shook his head, "not a bit."

"Well, I'll be damned," I thought. "What kind of a human being is he?"

I thought that Overture would stir up the emotions of an elephant, but here was a money baron telling me that it left him flat and unresponsive and that he preferred the claptrap and raucous melodies of a musical show. And yet Bill was a society man. Also he was a generous contributor to the Detroit Symphony. I got tremendously interested in Bill's history when he told me that he preferred musical comedy junk to the rich Wagnerian music. I looked into his history. Bill had been a mechanic. He had had very little schooling and when Mr. Ford began to build automobiles he "got in on the ground floor" with a $5,000 investment and came out a millionaire. He was what the world calls "a self-made

man." He was what I would call a victim of circumstances! He had money galore, but not a scintilla of culture.

Still he was a fine man in many ways, a hail-fellow-well-met. He was not dictatorial. He didn't pose. He was democratic. He invited me to his home in the aristocratic residential section of Detroit. I met his wife and daughters. The wife knew my history and had expressed a desire to meet me. I knew that there was nothing more than curiosity behind the invitation to call. They didn't invite me to their home because they considered me a desirable person. They just wanted to see how an ex-bank burglar would conduct himself; I was a curiosity. Nevertheless I went.

I looked forward to spending a pleasant evening. The wife was flabbergasted when she learned that I was a music lover. She said she "adored Wagner." Now I was all attention when she said she "adored Wagner." Anybody that adored Wagner, I concluded, must be a real person, so I immediately began to talk about "Parsifal," "Tannhäuser," "Lohengrin," "The Dusk of the Gods." I talked about Brahms, Beethoven, Debussy, Tschaikowsky. I did all the talking. She sat and listened. She agreed with everything I said. Presently she began to talk.

"I love Wagner's 'Kreutzer Sonata,'" she said. "What a marvelous thing that is! I simply adore it!"

"Wagner's 'Kreutzer Sonata'?" I exclaimed. "You mean Beethoven's 'Kreutzer Sonata.'"

"No, no," she smiled, "I mean Wagner, Wagner."

"I beg your pardon," I insisted, "Beethoven."

"Mamma, you're wrong," her daughter Dorothy, cut into the conversation. "Mr. Kelly is right."

"Let's see,"—Mamma raised her eyes to the ceiling,—"let's see now," she drawled. "Why, of course I'm wrong. How stupid of me."

I had a hunch that Mamma was a pretender. The hunch had developed into a positive conviction before the evening was over. What Mamma didn't know about Wagner and Beethoven would fill a book. Mamma didn't know any more about music than Papa did. Mamma went to the opera and the Symphony concerts simply because all the rest of the society people went there.

Dorothy was a ravishingly beautiful blonde. She was musical. She was well read. She understood and appreciated Wagner. She knew something about his history, his struggles to obtain recognition, his exile, his relationship with Nietzsche. Dorothy and I became good friends. She said none of the men with whom she associated talked her language, that I was the only man her father had invited to his home who was interested in books and music.

"All I hear from them is money, money," she shook her head, "automobiles, parties, dances, stocks."

The "big fellows" never extended more than one invitation to visit their homes, but quite frequently I received invitations from the ladies to escort them to clubs and cafés and dances that Papa and Mamma and their friends didn't patronize. Invariably I rejected the invitations. I didn't want to get myself in Dutch with the Papas and thereby jeopardize my chances of going up. I had a hunch what the Papas, the "big fellows" of the motor plant, would do to me if they learned that I was meeting their daughters on the quiet.

But I fell for one adorable female. She outtalked me, persuaded me to escort her to a masked ball one night.

"You'll be masked," she pleaded, "nobody will see your face. Don't be silly, Jackie, dear, come on."

So I went, though my judgment was that I shouldn't go. If I had been a smart fellow I would have resisted the charms of that beautiful devil. But who can resist the overtures of a beautiful girl! This one was the last word in physical beauty and she was as dumb as she was beautiful. She represented, as Wilde once said, the triumph of matter over mind.

The day after the ball Papa called me into his office and proceeded to tell me where I got off. He said I was a nice fellow in many ways, that I was entitled to a lot of credit for rehabilitating myself, that he liked me personally, but that he didn't care to have me running around town with his daughter. Now I knew that the daughter was interested in me. One of her friends had circulated the story that she was in love with me and that story had found its way to Papa's ears and Papa naturally was indignant. But I was not in love with the daughter. My love was back in New

York and I hastened to assure Papa that there was nothing to the story. I told him about Helen. I made an effort to convince him that there was absolutely nothing between me and his daughter except friendship. I perjured myself like a gentleman.

I had been with the company about two years and a half when this incident occurred. I was directing eighteen hundred men. I was going up like a skyrocket. The competition was keen and the double-crossing, underhand methods of my competitors were worthy of blackmailers. I was going up too fast to suit some of the narrow-gauged fellows; therefore, they talked about me and did everything within their power to halt my progress. When they heard that rumor about me and the big boy's daughter, they were more industrious than ever. They went to the big boy with the most impossible yarns and the big boy immediately highjacked me out of Detroit to one of the branch manufacturing plants. Later on he sent his daughter to Europe "to study music."

"What a chump I was," I thought, "to have gone stepping with his daughter."

When I received orders to go West and take charge of the Jonesville plant, I was also informed that my salary had been raised to $5000 per year. The switch from the factory to Jonesville didn't discourage me. I was determined to work my way back to the factory.

"I'll be back some day," I swore; "the harder you throw me the higher I'll bounce."

But before I hiked out for the jungles of Jonesville I went in to have a chat with the big boy. I asked him for a week's vacation.

"I want to go to New York and get married," I told him.

An angelic smile decorated his face.

"Fine," he shouted, "certainly, congratulations; take two weeks, if you want, or three."

He seemed relieved and I thought that he regretted his order to take charge of the Jonesville plant.

"I think I'm able to support a wife, now, Boss," I said to him, "and I think marriage will help me. I——"

"You've got the right idea, Jack," he interrupted me. "Every young man should marry. Marriage has a stabilizing

influence. It's a responsibility that develops character in a man. By all means get married."

Such platitudes, I thought! How can marriage develop character in a man? What has marriage got to do with character? What is character? And if this Puritan thinks so much about character, why does he spend so much time chasing chorus girls and gold-diggers?

I talked to Bob about Helen. I wanted to remove any impressions that he might be harboring relative to his daughter and me. He was a power in the organization and I wanted to convince him that he had the wrong idea about me and his daughter. I was determined to do that before I went to Jonesville. The daughter had been nothing more than a passing fancy with me. When I left him I was certain that I had convinced him. He seemed relieved. He was unusually cordial. He said I must call on him and his wife before I went West.

"The wife and I will be delighted to entertain you and the missus," he said. "Call on us before you go West, Jack. And," he went on, "when you put that Jonesville plant on its feet, I'm going to bring you back to the factory."

CHAPTER XXIII

MAKING GOOD—MARRIAGE

ALMOST three years had gone by since I left New York. I did a lot of thinking on that trip back East. I had gone West a pauper and now I was returning fairly well off. I had saved about $5,000. I was a better man in every way. I had developed. The past, so far as I was concerned, was behind me. The future loomed up enchantingly. It was filled with promise. I had made just one mistake.

"Hereafter," I concluded, "I'll steer clear of the women of the money barons."

I was wondering what sort of reception the Puritans would give me, how they would receive me now that I had rehabilitated myself. I didn't expect them to kill the fatted calf. I didn't expect them to throw their arms around my neck and weep. I didn't expect to hear the Triumphal March from "Aïda" on the phonograph when I entered the house, but I did anticipate a few gestures of friendship.

"Now that I've made good," I thought, "surely they'll say 'Welcome home.'"

I was still a trifle naïve! The Puritans hadn't changed. They were still the same old Puritans!

Change? They were worse than ever. My success aggravated them. They slammed the doors harder than ever. They gave me the air more severely than ever before; I was ostracised for all time.

"He's back again. That crook is around again. The cops will be raiding the house," were a few of the remarks I heard.

My success meant nothing to the Puritans. In their opinion I was still a crook. I was still unworthy of their friendship, of their good will and could never mount the social barriers that stood between them and me. I recall a conversation that I had with the eldest brother, Eddie, a day or two after

my arrival in New York. I made an effort, in a tactful way, to convince him that he was an ass. I wanted to have peace in the family for the mother's sake. I met Eddie as I was leaving the house. I extended my hand.

"Hello, Eddie," I greeted him. "I'm glad to see you again."

He didn't take my hand.

"Now, listen," I said to him, "why this superior attitude? I see no reason why the family should ignore me now. Three years ago there might have been some excuse for giving me the air; but I'm not the man that I was three years ago. I have made good. I'm on my way to position and power and prominence. I think I've done wonders within the last three years and I see no reason why the hatchet shouldn't be buried. I see no reason why you and the rest of the family shouldn't receive me as a human being."

"Listen," he sneered, "a crook is a crook with me all the time. My sisters and brothers have never associated with a crook and never will."

I felt like banging him on the nose.

"Still you're a good Catholic, aren't you?"

This remark angered him.

"What do you mean by that?" he grunted defiantly.

"You're an intelligent man," I went on; "interpret it. You know what I mean."

"Say," he blushed crimson, "don't make any cracks about my church, or you and I'll tie up."

"I don't want to fight with you," I went on; "I'm trying to point out to you that your church doesn't mean much to you. Your church teaches do good for evil, love your neighbor and so on; but you don't do these things. You do the opposite. I——"

My remarks made him sore and when I said that I didn't want to fight with him, I think he got the idea that I was afraid of him; whereupon he became very abusive and very courageous.

"You wouldn't fight me, eh!" he roared. "You're yellow like all the rest of the crooks."

He mounted the steps to enter the house.

"Wait a minute," I said, "I don't want you to leave me

with the impression that I'm yellow or that I'm afraid to fight with you. I assure you that I'm not yellow. I——"

"Ah," he snarled, "you've got a streak in you a yard wide."

Now I was infuriated and I longed to take a wallop at him, but I smothered my feelings and went on my way.

He was unusually rude when I visited the house the next day. I heard him talking upstairs.

"I'm going to throw him out of this house," I heard him say. "The next time he enters this home I'm going to throw him out."

His mother was pleading with him to stop talking about me. Helen and I sat in the parlor discussing plans for our marriage. Suddenly the Puritan came dashing into the parlor. He was red with rage and his eyes glared like the eyes of a lunatic. He ordered me out of the house. I looked at him and smiled.

"Heavens," I was amused, "what a terrible person you are. Are you losing your mind?"

He threatened me with violence if I didn't leave the house immediately.

"Why create a scene?" I tried to pacify him.

He was immune to appeal. I wanted to go for him, but I held myself in restraint. He continued to denounce me. Finally I got up on my feet.

"Now," I said to him, "if you can throw me out, go to it. I'll never enter the house again if you can throw me out. If you can throw me out, I'll make you a present of a thousand dollars."

He was not quite so furious now.

"I don't want to have a scene in the house," I went on, "but if you're so terribly anxious to have a fight, I'll accommodate you. Let's go down to Riverside Drive and have it out. If you lick me, I'll eat your hat. Come on."

I started for the door, but he didn't follow me. Then I was ashamed of myself for having talked as I did. It seemed to me that I had put myself on the same plane with him when I offered to fight him. I was relieved when Grace, Fannie and Gertrude, his sisters, persuaded him to go upstairs with them.

"You shouldn't argue with that terrible character," Grace shouted at him as they mounted the stairs together.

My God, what a tribe that family was!

But what a different reception I received from the writing men, the artists and musicians! They were glad to see me. They rejoiced in my success. They greeted me affectionately. Frank Harris heard I was in town before I got a chance to call on him and immediately sent me an invitation to visit him. Everybody treated me royally except the Puritans. One night Eddie Smith took me to a dinner at an Italian restaurant where I met Theodore Dreiser, Aliester Crowley, an English writer who was a friend of Wilde, Lord Albert Douglas, Shaw, Arnold Bennett and other noted men of letters. There was a famous artist at the dinner, George Leonard, a celebrated Italian musician, an opera singer and an internationally known poet. All these celebrities knew my history and yet they were interested in me. They were not interested as the money barons were interested. They didn't consider me a curiosity. No, sir—these gods took a fancy to me because I was a real human being, because I was interested in the things that they were interested in, because I had a mind, because I had something to say and knew how to say it, because I could give as well as receive.

The writing men never viewed me as a social leper. I was no problem to them, no curiosity, no monstrosity. Hell, no! I was A B C to them. These fellows who dabbled with the stuff of life, who wove dramas and symphonies out of what they saw in life, understood me. They understood my defeats and victories, why I had lost and won. They saw me as a man who had been overwhelmed and driven by the forces of life until I landed in the Pit. And then they saw me as a man who had gloriously triumphed over these forces. There was never any reference to sin, morality, immorality, God, Heaven, Purgatory and Hell in my chats with them. Everything was translated in terms of environment, need, training, strength, mental and physical, cause and effect, the biological, psychological and sociological phases of parasitism and delinquency. The Puritans talked soul and conscience to me, redemption and prayer. I would be in the Pit to-day if I had listened to them!

I never realized what a tragedy my life had been until I met the writing men. I envied them. I never envied the rich men. The writing men stimulated me. The money barons left me flat. I would have much rather been a Spencer, a Beethoven, a Wagner, a Swinburne, a Dreiser, a Harris or an Eddie Smith than an Andrew Carnegie, an Astor, a Gould, or a Vanderbilt.

And I was always sad when I left New York to ramble back to the automobile factory.

"If I could only be around those fellows all the time," I thought, "I'd be happy."

And I always went back to the automobile factory with new ideas about life and beauty. God save the writing men!

After Helen and I were married we had an argument or two about the writing men I knew. I recall the first spat as though it occurred only yesterday.

When we stopped over in Detroit on my way to take charge of the Jonesville plant, I called on Bob, the big boy to whom I referred in another part of my narrative. You will recall Bob's invitation to bring Helen out to his home "to meet his wife." Bob did himself proud that night, and Helen was completely flabbergasted by the pomp and show of Bob's palatial home. There were servants, food, color and ostentation to the right and to the left of us. I thought the home was quite gaudily decorated. Helen had an idea that it was splendidly decorated. It looked more like a bric-a-brac shop to me than a home and Bob, in my opinion, was nothing more than a rich ass. Helen thought Bob was a wonderful man.

"What a marvelous man," she began to talk about Bob after we left the house.

"Marvelous?" I laughed at her, "there's nothing marvelous about him. Wealth doesn't make a man marvelous."

"It doesn't?" she asked. "Then what does?"

"Mind," I replied, "understanding, the ability to create things that live. The only marvelous men in the world are the writing men, the Shaws, the Swinburnes, the Whistlers, the Spencers, the great musicians, Wagner, Verdi, Beethoven, Brahms. When Bob dies nobody will remember him, but men like Shaw, Swinburne, Whistler, Spencer, Wagner,

Verdi, Brahms and Beethoven never die. I'd rather be any one of those immortals than a million Bobs. What the hell has Bob done?"

"I see," she laughed sardonically, "Mr. Smith, Silas Bent, Mr. Harris and the rest of those writers that you know have convinced you that they are the salt of the earth. They convinced you that God didn't make the world and now you believe that they are greater than God and greater than these big business men who have given you a chance to earn a living. What did those writers ever give you?"

Helen didn't understand and at that time I didn't try to make her understand.

"I'll wait," I concluded, "I'll wait until she has had an opportunity to know these money barons. I'll wait until she has known a few of the writing men. Some day she'll understand."

Helen, of course, had an idea that Bob had invited us to his home primarily because he liked us, liked me. She thought Bob and his wife considered us desirable companions. If I had told her that Bob and his wife didn't consider us desirable companions, social equals and that his invitation to call was based on nothing more than curiosity, nothing more than a desire to see what sort of woman would marry an ex-crook she might not have thought that Bob was such a marvelous man. I didn't want to shatter any of her illusions. I didn't want to hurt her; therefore I let her harbor the conviction that Bob was marvelous.

Helen knew absolutely nothing about men. She knew absolutely nothing about life. She was the direct antithesis of her sisters and brothers. They were sophisticated, cruel, hard-boiled and worldly-wise. She was charitable, tender and ingenuous. They treated her shamefully, but she never complained. Not once did I ever hear her speak of them disparagingly. There was a lot of the saint in Helen! Religion was something more than a passion with her; it was her very life!

She had great faith in mankind because she didn't know mankind. She liked to help people. She never entertained a grudge. She was forever praying for this one and that one, having masses celebrated, lighting candles, saying the rosary,

"making the stations of the cross," attending missions, making novenas. She said I owed my success to God and whenever I told her that I was trying to achieve a certain something she would tell me to offer up a prayer to Saint Anthony, the miracle man. But I couldn't pray to Saint Anthony. It seemed to me that I had to work and think to get the things that I wanted. Besides, I had read too much about Saint Anthony in Anatole France's *On Life and Letters.*

I always entertained the deepest regard for Helen's religious convictions. I never ridiculed them. I never made any effort to convert her to my views. Now and then she brought priests to our home, nuns and brothers, all of whom tried to proselyte me and failed. I always treated them with highest courtesy. I had cultivated tolerance. They were good people, but they didn't talk my language.

CHAPTER XXIV

FIGHTING THE OLD "RECORD"

HELEN and I had a perfectly lovely time in Jonesville! We had a lovely time for about three months. "Everything was Jake," as they say in the underworld, until the natives got hep to the fact that I was an ex-crook. Then they began to ride me.

The Jonesville plant was in a terrible condition. It stood very low on the efficiency charts. They had an unusually high production cost per car and the quality of the work they turned out was very poor. There was absolutely no discipline in the plant. The men practically ran the plant. The superintendent spent most of his time in the office with his feet on the desk smoking butts; therefore he didn't get the results that Bob and the rest of the big Boys at Detroit thought he should have got.

Within three months after my arrival I had brought the plant up from sixteenth to third place. I had reduced the production costs over fifty per cent, had reduced the overhead approximately thirty-five per cent and was building a much better car than my predecessor. I always got an awful kick out of doing things that the other fellow had failed to do or couldn't do, and I was very happy over my success with the Jonesville plant. I had letters galore from the big boys at Detroit complimenting me for the good work. I was hobnobbing with the prominent people of Jonesville. The prominent people of Jonesville didn't know that I was an ex-crook. I believed that I had lived down the past, that it was a dead issue and that Helen and I were on our way to genuine happiness. That was one of the worst hunches that I ever entertained!

A detective dynamited the hunch. One day I was coming out of a bank where I made monthly deposits when I felt a

hand on my shoulder. I turned and looked into the eyes of a dick.

"Well, for Christ's sake," he grunted, "if it isn't Jack Kelly! Whataya know about that?"

He grabbed me by the wrists when I turned and faced him. I broke away.

"What's the idea?" I said.

"The idea?" he grunted. "The idea is that the Chief wants to see y'."

"Now, listen," I said to him, "the Chief doesn't want to see me, and you know that he doesn't want to see me. I've been on the level for nearly five years. If you don't know it, you're not in touch with current events. I haven't associated with a thief in five years and I——"

"Say, say," he interrupted me, "y' can tell all that to the Chief."

I was fighting mad. He pulled out a pair of "nippers" and proceeded to slip them around the wrist of my right hand. I drew my hand away from him.

"Don't make a sucker out of yourself," I pleaded with him, "if you will listen to me for a few moments I will convince you that I'm on the level."

His mind was functioning like a copper's mind.

"Looking this bank over, eh?" he grinned knowingly. "Gitting ready to knock it off, eh?"

"I've been depositing money in that bank for three months," I told him. "I've been working right here in this burg for three months."

"Y' have?" he roared. "Where y' working and what are y' doing?"

"I'm running the Ford Motor Company plant."

"What?" he stammered.

"Come with me," I led him over to where my car was standing, "and I'll show you what I'm doing."

He followed like a lamb. I drove out to the plant and escorted him into my office. After I had dictated a few letters to my secretary I took the sleuth through the plant. He was the most surprised dick imaginable.

"Well, for Christ's sake!" he kept muttering, "if this don't beat the band, I'll fade out of the picture."

When we returned to my office he began shooting all sorts of questions at me. He wanted to know how I got the job, how I got out of the underworld, how I squared all the old "raps" (charges) that the police had against me, who the friend was that gave me "this swell job." He had an idea that the job had been "given" to me, that I hadn't earned it and that it didn't require any special ability to hold a job of that sort.

"Nobody gave me the job," I assured him. "I've earned it. I've worked like hell and I've thought like hell for three years to get a job like this."

"Well, fer Christ's sake," he was dumfounded, "who would have thought it? The Chief'll throw a Brodie when he hears this, Jack, and so will the rest of the boys in the office."

"Now, Tommy," I said to him, "if you want to do me a favor you might forget about what I have been. This is a small burg and if it ever gets out that I'm an ex-grifter it will spread like a forest fire. It isn't necessary to advertise me. I——"

"Mum's the word, Jack," he replied, "if that's the way y' feel about it. I won't say a word to nobody, not a word."

"You give me your word on that?"

"On the level," he swore.

"So far as I am concerned," I went on, "I wouldn't care a damn if you told every man, woman and child in town about my history. I'm not thinking of myself; I'm thinking of my wife."

"Don't worry, Jack," he assured me, "I'll not tip y' off. I'll never say a word to anybody about yer record."

I knew what was coming when he told me that he had a nephew working in the plant, and this nephew, by the way, was a good-for-nothing, time-killing fellow with whom I had had a little trouble. When I arrived to take charge of the plant the nephew was an assistant foreman in the body-building department. His work was unsatisfactory, so I demoted him and put another man in his place. The other man was an ex-convict, though I knew absolutely nothing about his past when I gave him the job. I gave him the job simply because I thought he would make a better executive than the dick's

nephew. I never played favorites. I promoted men strictly on their merits.

The dick began to plead the cause of his nephew. He wanted me to give "Joey" a bigger job with more money. I tried to convince him that it was up to "Joey" as to whether he got a bigger job with more money or remained in the job that he had for the rest of his life. The dick had an idea that an automobile plant was managed in precisely the same manner that the politicians managed the city. He thought the good jobs went to the fellow who had the strongest drag.

"If I try to run this plant as a politician runs a city," I began to explain, "by giving jobs to fellows who are not qualified to fill them, failure is inevitable. My success depends on my ability to surround myself with fellows who can do the things that I want done, fellows who can plan and think and organize. If I select cripples it's only a matter of time until I get the gate."

I told him that I would give "Joey" a chance to make good, the same chance that I gave every other man in the plant. If "Joey" could sell himself to me, he would go up; if he couldn't, he stayed where he was.

"The kid's all broken up over losing that assistant foreman's job," he said. "Give 'im a chance, Jack, and he'll make good."

"I'll see what I can do for him, Tommy," I went on; "if he can deliver the goods I'll take care of him."

The next morning "Joey" came to my office. He said "Uncle Tommy" had told him to come see me.

"Uncle Tom and me was talking about y' last night," he began.

"I've known your uncle a long time," I said, "he's a fine fellow."

"Uncle Tom likes you," he was grinning from ear to ear; "he told me you was one of the best bank burglars that ever lived and the only one he ever knowed that squared it."

"Uncle Tom gave you my history, eh?" I was fighting mad.

"He boosted y' to the skies," he went on. "He likes y'. He said he would do anything fer y' and he said that y' would take care of me and that's what I come in to see y' about."

"I'll be glad to help you," I replied. "I'll be glad to give

you a bigger job when you convince me that you can handle one."

I wanted to throw him out of my office, but I thought I would act the diplomat. I saw at once that he and "Uncle Tom" thought they had me "on the hip," that I would do most anything for "Joey" if "Joey" wouldn't circulate my history throughout the plant. They probably had an idea that I would do anything to cover up my history.

"I'd like to git my old job back," the nephew continued. "I can make good on that job. The boys don't like Fletcher. They know he's an ex-convict. They won't work fer him like they would work for me."

"Joey," I leaned over and looked him in the eyes, "I took you off that job because you weren't making good. Fletcher is building bodies at a lower cost than you built them. I didn't know Fletcher was an ex-convict when I gave him that job, but even if I had known it, I would have given it to him simply because he was a worker and a thinker. Histories mean absolutely nothing to me. Histories mean absolutely nothing to this company. The company knew all about my history when it employed me and I have come up to where I am to-day on my merits. Merit is the standard by which men are judged."

He protested that he knew more about building bodies than Fletcher, the ex-convict. I could see that he resented the implication that Fletcher was a better executive than he had been. He argued with me. I smothered my feelings. Then I decided to resort to a little strategy.

"Well, Joey," I said to him, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you another chance to prove to me that you're a better executive than Fletcher. Fletcher has been running the job for three months. He's been building bodies at an average cost of two dollars and thirty-five cents per body. When you ran the department your costs were two dollars and ninety-five cents per body. I'll give you the department for thirty days. If you can build as good a body as Fletcher has been building at the same labor cost I'll consider giving you Fletcher's job."

"Fine," his face lighted up with a smile. "I'll do it. When do I take charge?"

"To-morrow morning," I told him.

Now I was thoroughly convinced that "Joey" was a frost. I knew that Fletcher was a better man in every way. There was a motive behind my decision to give him Fletcher's job temporarily. I was looking ahead. I realized that the time was coming when I should have a lot of trouble. I knew my troubles would begin when "Joey" circulated my history throughout the plant. I knew what the horny-handed mechanics would say when they heard the history. I knew there would be talk about my partiality to ex-convicts. I had heard the old cry before at the factory in Detroit when I began to climb. On more than one occasion I heard some mechanic say: "Y' got to be an ex-convict to git a good job in this joint."

I called Fletcher into my office the day that I gave "Joey" the job. I told him just what had occurred between "Joey" and me.

"Coogan thinks I didn't treat him square when I demoted him," I informed Fletcher, "so I have decided to give him a chance to convince me that he is a better man than you are. Your work has been perfectly satisfactory in every way. I have no criticism to offer. You've made good."

Tears crept into Fletcher's eyes. I could almost read his thought.

"I'll stake my life," I said to myself, "that he thinks I have taken him off that job because he's an ex-convict."

My heart went out to him. I dismissed my secretary. I wanted to exchange confidences with the ex-underworld man.

"I know just what you are thinking about, Fletcher. I'll bet a hundred dollars that I can tell you what's flitting through your mind. If I guess, will you tell me?" I patted him on the shoulder.

"Yes, sir," he hung his head.

"You've got a hunch that your record as a crook has prejudiced me. Am I right?"

A sob struggled through his lips and the tears streamed out of his eyes.

"A guy with a record can't get along," he murmured.

"To hell he can't get along," I cut in. "A guy with a record can get along if he's got the guts."

"No, he can't, Mr. Kelly," he replied. "I've been trying fer two years. I've worked hard in this plant to get ahead. I was happy when you gave me the job of foreman. It made my wife happy and only last night I was telling her that I was afraid that I would lose the job if you found out that I was an ex-convict and now I've lost it. Them guys in the body department have been talking about me ever since you gave me the job, but I made them hit the ball all the same. I built bodies cheaper and better than Coogan built them."

"Well, Fletcher," I leaned back in my chair and smiled at him, "what would you think if I told you that I am an ex-convict?"

"Ex-convict?" he gasped.

"Yes, with a record a mile long."

"On the level?" he warmed up to me now. "On the level, Mr. Kelly?"

"Dead on the level," I assured him.

We exchanged confidences. He understood why I made the switch with "Joey" when I told him about my relationship with "Uncle Tommy," the Central Office man.

"These Puritans will talk about me as they have talked about you," I went on, "when they learn that I am an ex-convict. They will try to defeat me as they have tried to defeat you, but I can't be defeated. I'll have them eating out of my hand because I'm smarter than they. They can't lick me and they can't lick you if you buck up and be a man. If you can convince the Ford Motor Company that you can do things that the Puritans can't do, that you can think, plan and organize and produce results, why, the company will take you for what you are and forget about what you have been."

I told Fletcher to sit tight and say nothing. I told him I was convinced that "Joey" was a lightweight, that he couldn't make good and that when the thirty days were up he would lose the job.

"Go back to the body department and work like hell and keep your mouth shut," I advised him.

The Central Office man was tickled to death when I gave "Joey" his job. He came out to the plant to see me. He said he was "for me fifty ways from the Ace."

"What a change there will be," I thought, "when Joey loses the job!"

And "Joey" lost the job at the end of the thirty days. He couldn't deliver the goods. And when I put Fletcher back, "Joey" immediately began to circulate my history.

"Uncle Tommy" came out to the plant again. He was infuriated. He said the kid was sore at me and that he was afraid that the kid would talk about me if I didn't put him in the job again.

"I told him that he shouldn't make any cracks about yer record, Jack," the copper began to bull me.

"It doesn't make a damn bit of difference to me, Tommy," I told him, "what anybody says about that record and if Joey doesn't attend to his job he'll go out the gate hell bent for election."

The copper pleaded with me to give "Joey" a better job.

"Joey isn't equipped for a better job."

The sleuth was mad. He intimated that I should try to avoid a scandal.

"If these men ever git wise, Jack," he said, "that yer an ex-con, y'll have a hell of a time running this plant."

Here was a challenge. I accepted it.

"Tommy," I grinned at him, "I'll run the plant and I'll make the boys eat out of my hand. If Joey develops into a disorganizer I'll can him right off the reel."

"Easiest way's the best, Jack," he grunted.

"I never quit," I replied. "I never look for a battle, but when somebody tries to bully me, I fight. If Joey fights me, I'll can him so damn quick that it'll make his head swim."

Finally the copper delivered his ultimatum. He told me that if I didn't give "Joey" a better job that it was all off between him and me. I asked him just what he meant by that remark.

"You mean that you'll tip me off if I don't take care of Joey?"

"I'll run y' out of this man's town if y' don't take care of the kid." He shook a clenched fist in my face.

I ordered him out of my office. The battle was on.

Fletcher brought me the first intimation of the revolt. He said "Joey" was "laying down on him," and that he had told

all the men in the body department that I was "an ex-con."

I called "Joey" into my office and canned him.

"You're a rat," I told him, "just like your uncle, and this is no place for rats; get out."

The day after I canned him the body department gang sent me a departmental in which they stated that they didn't care to work under Fletcher and that they would quit if I didn't appoint a new foreman. I invited them to my office to discuss the matter. They came. The spokesman was a big roughneck named Jimmy Sullivan. He and "Joey" were pals.

"What's the matter with Fletcher?" I asked Sullivan.

"He's an ex-convict."

"Well, what difference does that make," I replied, "so long as he can run the job?"

Sullivan said "the boys" didn't want to take orders from an ex-convict.

"Well, I'm an ex-convict, what about that? Do you object to taking orders from me?"

"We heard you was an ex-con," the mouthpiece for the Puritans admitted, "but we didn't know that it was the truth."

"It's the truth," I snapped; "don't be laboring under any misapprehensions; I'm an ex-convict. Coogan didn't give you a bum steer when he told you that I am an ex-convict. Now if you can't take orders from Fletcher, I don't see how you're going to take orders from me."

"You've always treated us all right, Mr. Kelly," Mr. Sullivan continued. "We don't mind working fer you and taking orders from you, but we ain't going to take no orders from Fletcher, and that goes."

"Then you're going to tell me how to run this plant? You mean to say that I should only appoint the sort of foreman that you like? Is that right?"

The gentlemen were embarrassed. I was on the verge of telling them to get out of my office. I felt like firing the entire gang, but reason and tact intervened and predominated. I strangled my feelings. I thought I could win them. I wanted to avoid trouble and yet I wanted to rule. I talked with them, pointing out that their hostility to Fletcher was not good sportsmanship and that when they refused to work for Fletcher they were practically refusing to work for me.

"I've tried to treat all you boys squarely," I spread the salve, "and I think I have succeeded, haven't I, boys?" I waited for an answer.

"Yes, sir," Sullivan responded. "Y' certainly have, Mr. Kelly."

"Now, I don't think it's giving me an even break when you threaten to quit on me simply because I made Fletcher foreman. Fletcher's a good fellow; but if he doesn't make good, he can't hold the job, and when he fails to make good, I'm going to give the job to one of you boys. Give Fletcher a chance. Try him for a while and then come in and see me again. I want to have harmony. I want all you boys to be happy. I want to be your friend and I want all you boys to be my friends."

They filed out of the office one by one. Then I called Fletcher in.

"If they don't obey your orders, send them back to my office. Don't let any one of them disobey an order and get away with it. Go on as you have always gone. Don't let up for a minute and don't tolerate insubordination of any kind for a minute," I told him.

The Puritans had me with my back to the wall once more. Once more they had me on the defensive and I didn't underestimate the precariousness of my position. I knew that the eyes of the "big boys" at Detroit were on me. I knew that some of the "big boys" would rejoice if I failed. I knew that *all* the little fellows would certainly rejoice if I failed. Furthermore, I knew that I had to stand or fall on the strength of the record that I made at the Jonesville plant. This was the first crisis that I had been up against since I began to beat my way to the top. I knew manufacturing from the ground up. I had handled men successfully at the factory in Detroit; but while I was at the factory, I was a subordinate, taking orders from the fellow higher up and the fellow higher up made all the decisions and took all the credit. Now I had to make my own decisions. Here was the test. Here was a situation which would prove whether or not I was an eighteen-carat executive with the ability to make my own decisions and think for myself or just a good order-taker. If I made a bad play and lost

my hold on the men, my future was a blank. If I handled this situation correctly, I was O. K. I laid my plans.

My two assistant superintendents, earning five thousand a year, began to slow up on me. They had heard the story of my record as an underworld man from "Joey." They didn't carry out my orders as they had been carrying them out before they learned that I was "an ex-con." Production costs began to soar. Detroit wrote me letters about the rise in costs.

Every department in the plant was slipping. I knew that I was being double-crossed right and left, and yet I hesitated about resorting to disciplinary measures. Day in and day out I resorted to persuasion in an effort to make the departmental heads and my two assistants "hit the ball."

Finally the body department "struck." Sullivan and the entire gang walked into my office one morning after the whistle had blown and notified me that they "were through" unless I took Fletcher, the ex-convict, off the job.

"All the foremen in the plant are with us," Sullivan, the spokesman for the gang, declared, "your two assistants are with us and if y' don't take that ex-con off the job the whole plant is liable to quit."

"My assistants are with you?" I asked Sullivan.

"They certainly are," he snapped defiantly.

I sent for Sanders and Bullard, the assistant superintendents. They admitted that they had discussed the possibility of the plant "striking" if I didn't take Fletcher off the job as foreman. It seemed to me that the time for action had arrived. Still I hesitated about "taking the bull by the horns." I told them that there was very little difference between Fletcher and me.

"I'm an ex-convict," I said; "the Ford Motor Company knew that I was an ex-convict when it employed me. If you object to taking orders from Fletcher, you must certainly object to taking them from me."

It was evident that they didn't like me any more than they did Fletcher, and I knew that if I let them get away with their ultimatum on Fletcher, that it was only a matter of time until they would be telling me where *I* got off.

"Shut down the plant," I instructed my assistants, "and tell

all the men to assemble on the body department floor; I have something to say to them."

I started for the body department. The gang followed me. I had decided to make an example of my double-crossing assistants and the departmental heads. "I'll teach these mugs a lesson that they won't soon forget," I mused.

When all the men arrived in the body department, I began my speech. First of all I told them a thing or two about my history, after which I touched on Fletcher, explaining to them that I was not aware of the fact that Fletcher was an ex-convict when I made him foreman.

"Some of you boys may be harboring the idea that I knew Fletcher in the underworld," I said; "but I never saw the man before I came to this plant. I picked him for the job simply because I thought he was better qualified to fill the job than any other man in the department. Favoritism didn't enter into my selection of Fletcher. It was merit and nothing else. I've been a square-shooter with all you fellows. I've tried to give every one of you an even break and I know that I have succeeded. We never had any trouble until Joe Coogan told you that I was an ex-convict. Things haven't been the same since you got the low-down on me and Fletcher. The men who should have been loyal to me regardless of what I have been, the men who should have stood by me, have double-crossed me right and left. Now I am told that the entire plant will quit if I don't can Fletcher, and my answer to that ultimatum is this: I hereby notify the two assistant superintendents and every departmental head and every man in the body department that they are through. Any man who doesn't want to take orders from an ex-convict can quit right now and get to hell out of this plant. The men who haven't any objections to working for me may go back to their jobs and later on in the day I will appoint new foremen and new assistant superintendents."

I went back to my office to await developments. I had a hunch that I had won, but I wasn't sure. Presently the two assistant superintendents entered, followed by the five departmental heads. They began to "welch." They didn't think I had given them "an even break." They thought I "had 'em wrong."

I saw at once that they were a yellow-hearted gang of rats, so I proceeded to stick the iron in them harder than ever.

"No," I told them, "I haven't got you wrong at all. I've got you dead to rights. You tried to bull me and failed. You tried to tell me how to run the plant and if I had let you get away with that, you would have run me out of the plant eventually. I know you Puritans. I've had a hell of a lot of experience with your kind, you holier-than-thou hounds who don't want to take orders from an ex-convict. Beat it before I get a club and go to work on your heads."

They left my office pronto and I was glad that they did, because I was all set for a riot and might have done something that I would have been sorry for later on.

The newspapers heard about the affair and ran a story on it. The "big boys" at Detroit heard of it before I sent a report to them and they responded with congratulatory letters.

"You handled that situation as it should have been handled," was the tenor of the letters.

The departmental heads went to Detroit to plead their cause. I learned later that the factory officials gave them the air.

"If Mr. Kelly dismissed you, his dismissal stands; he's the boss," the big boys at the factory told the double-crossing executives.

CHAPTER XXV

QUITTING THE PURITAN FOLD

WHEN the Puritans of Jonesville ascertained that I was an ex-crook, they gave Helen and me "the cold shoulder." The invitations to call were discontinued. Helen and I were lone travelers after that.

Now this didn't cause me to lose any sleep. It was not the first time that the Puritans had sandbagged me socially and I knew that it wouldn't be the last. The Puritans didn't mean very much to me. I was never very much concerned about them and I only went out simply because I wanted to please Helen. The Puritans were not my kind of people and whenever they gave me the air my mind went back to the writing men in New York, the artists and musicians and the rest of the sacred band who always extended the hand of comradeship to me.

But Helen didn't react to the social ostracism as I did. It worried her immensely. She was very unhappy.

"You shouldn't let such things annoy you," I would say to her. "These people are not worth knowing. They are narrow, stupid, cruel."

There was one woman in Jonesville who had been unusually nice to Helen and me before the exposé. She and her husband were first-rate church members. Every Sunday we sat in their pew. Mrs. Kennedy loved Helen. Mr. Kennedy thought I was a great fellow. They never entertained unless we were invited, and yet when the blow-off came they were the first to sidetrack us. After the blow-off they didn't ask us to occupy a portion of their pew at the high Mass. After the blow-off they didn't ask us to call; they quit us cold!

"I never would have thought that the Kennedys would have treated us this way," Helen declared. "I thought they were different."

"The Puritans are all alike," I said. "If the Kennedys were

first-class atheists or agnostics they would have been different."

Helen worried so much that I finally had to put her in a hospital. Then the Puritans began to come back one by one and I began to drive them back one by one. I had engaged a private room for Helen at the hospital and I had given orders to the nurse that none of the church-going gang should be permitted to see her. I gave the nurse a list of names of men and women who were to be barred and a list of men and women (just two, Fletcher and his wife) who were to be admitted.

The news that she had gone to the hospital leaked out. Mrs. Kennedy sent a bouquet of flowers. There was a card attached to the flowers upon which was written:

"I will call to see you to-morrow afternoon at two."

I arrived at the hospital at one-thirty. I wanted to greet Mrs. Kennedy. She came breezing in about two o'clock. The nurse stopped her at the door, telling her that Mr. Kelly had left instructions that she was not to be admitted to Mrs. Kelly's room. I could hear her and the nurse talking.

"I'm a friend of Mrs. Kelly's," she pleaded; "there must be some mistake."

The nurse finally came into the room and told me what Mrs. Kennedy had said. I went outside to see her.

"Oh, howdado," she smiled at me. "I called to see your wife and this terrible nurse tells me that you have left orders that I'm not to see Mrs. Kelly. I——"

"That's correct," I interrupted her; "neither my wife nor I are concerned about the visits of you, your husband or any of the rest of the social jackasses of Jonesville and if we never see you again we'll be happy. Here," I handed her the flowers, "take these and put them on the altar when you go to church again. I can buy my wife all the flowers she requires."

She blushed scarlet, turned and hurried away without making any reply. That afternoon when I got back to the plant, the outraged Mr. Kennedy was waiting for me. His wife had told him that I had insulted her. He demanded an explanation and an apology. I gave him neither. I simply told him what I thought of him, his wife and the rest of the Puritans of Jonesville who turned their backs on me when

they learned that I was an ex-convict. Mr. Kennedy became violently abusive and finally he struck me, whereupon I proceeded to give him such a fine trimming that he went to a police station and preferred charges against me.

Mr. Kennedy was responsible for the altercation. I had merely told him in a nice way that he and his wife had acted like fools, that they were stupid, uncharitable, cruel.

"You considered me a great fellow. Your wife considered my wife a dear girl," I said. "We were desirable social companions until you heard that I was an ex-convict and then you gave us the air. Jesus said do good for evil, love thy neighbor as thyself. You pretend to be a follower of Jesus and yet you shun me because I have sinned. Personally, I have never considered you, your wife, or any of the rest of the people that I have met in Jonesville to be desirable companions. I rate myself head and shoulders above all of you. I never had any ambition to cultivate any of you Puritans. None of you talked my language. None of you were interested in the things in which I am interested. I have never solicited your friendship. I never wanted it. I don't want it now. I went to your homes simply to please my wife and I consider all of you a gang of uncharitable fools."

It was at the conclusion of this speech that Mr. Kennedy banged me on the nose. When I was hailed into court the following morning every detail of my history as a bank burglar was resurrected. The Judge denounced me for attacking "one of the city's leading citizens." I was fined fifty dollars and costs. The newspapers gave the story of the affair to their readers. Every moron in Jonesville had my history at his finger tips and wherever I went they talked about me.

There was a time in my life when I might have shed tears when a thing like this occurred. There was a time in my life when such treatment would have made me feel like resorting to murder. There were times when I have been filled with self-disparagement and shame and humility, but not now—oh, Lord! No, decidedly no! I was able to appraise human nature now. I could tell the difference between a dub and substantial worth-while person and all these Puritans were dubs of the first rank.

When the Jonesville morons began to ride me, some of the

men at the plant developed into rebels. They tried to organize another strike, but they didn't get very far with the plans for another strike, for I immediately canned about twenty-five of them when Fletcher tipped me off to what they were trying to accomplish. I had the Jonesville plant at the head of the efficiency chart. I led the way in low production costs, quality and manufacturing methods. I built better cars and cheaper cars than any other plant in the organization.

I went from Jonesville to Detroit and then to Toledo to manage plants. Wherever I went, I made good. My salary had gone up to $15,000 a year and I always had a social standing until the Puritans got "the low-down" on my underworld record. When that record became known, the Puritans ditched me. They never failed to ditch me. No, not once!

Helen was terribly unhappy and when I saw that she was beginning to break under the strain, I too, was unhappy. It seemed to me that I had been much happier when I was associating with crooks. It seemed to me that crooks were infinitely more desirable companions than these cold-blooded, double-crossing pillars of society who gave me the air when they learned that I was an ex-crook. And yet these so-called square-shooters had a lot of the rat in them. They did things that I wouldn't do. Their wives did things that Helen wouldn't do. I had seen the men "making plays" for the wives of their associates. I had seen the wives "making plays" for the husbands of their associates. The underworld men didn't do these things. An underworld man's wife or sweetheart was regarded with respect and honor by his pals. We branded men rats who "made plays" for their pals' wives or sweethearts and the man who did those things was placed in the same class with squealers, and squealers couldn't live!

As the days rolled along I was growing more and more dissatisfied with my lot and on more than one occasion I was on the verge of quitting and returning to New York. I wanted to go back to my kind of people, the writing men. The "scribblers" were real people. In many ways they were like the crooks that I had known. They were square, loyal, generous and charitable. They were good drinking companions. They had color to them, personality, character, and conventions didn't mean a damn thing. I was always happy when I

was with the "scribblers." I hated to leave them at the end of my vacation period from the factory. I always spent the two weeks vacation with them and when I boarded the train to return to the automobile country it was just like boarding a train to go to Sing Sing. It seemed that I was leaving behind me everything in life that was worth having.

"God Almighty, if I could only write; if I could only write!" was my unending plaint.

I was earning approximately $15,000 a year in the automobile business, but if I could have earned one-tenth that much money writing I would have quit the motor game at the drop of a hat!

According to the conventional standards of success, I was a successful man. Within six years I had gone from $2.72 a day to $15,000 a year. My progress had been phenomenal. I knew it. It was better than the money barons had done. They hadn't come through as I had come through. They came through on Ford's shoulders. They cashed in on Ford's success. Ford "made them." They had got in on the ground floor when he began to manufacture automobiles. They had invested three or four thousand dollars and came out with millions. They were beneficiaries of circumstances! And they were still the same old mechanics with the same old bourgeois philosophy. They hadn't developed mentally. Their idea of success began and ended with dollars, dollars, dollars! What a gang of mediocrities!

I couldn't "see" them because they were dull and because they talked nothing but money, stocks, automobiles, women. They couldn't "see" me because I talked books, music, art and because I was an ex-crook. In the factory they were hail-fellows-well-met. They were cordial and congenial with me in the factory, but outside the factory they were entirely different. I was not invited to their drinking parties, their clubs, their theater parties, the golf links. I made an effort to join one of the prominent clubs and got the air. I subsequently learned why I got the air. They didn't want me. I was an ex-crook. The fellow, one of the "big boys" at the factory, who put in the rap against me, opposed my application for membership. He thought I "was a nice fellow, but not exactly the sort of man that the club should take in."

When I ascertained that he had opposed my application, I went to him for an explanation.

"I thought you were my friend," I said to him.

"Your friend?" he stammered. "Of course I'm your friend. What made you think I was not your friend."

"I heard you opposed my application for membership at the club and I want to know why you opposed it."

"I opposed your application for membership at the club?" he began to stall and pose.

"That's what I've been told." I waited for his reply.

"No, Jack," he went on, "you've been misinformed—misinformed, old boy—I didn't exactly oppose it. No—I didn't do that. I like you too much to do that, Jack, but I'll tell you what I did do. Some of the members on the membership committee asked me certain things about your past and of course I was compelled to tell them, much as I hated to do so. I couldn't very well tell a lie or misrepresent matters. I had to tell the truth about your history when they asked me. You see it's an old club, one of the oldest in the city and it's more or less exclusive and its membership is limited. A man must have a certain standing in the business world before he can be admitted and he must be a bona fide resident of the city. You're not a bona fide resident of the city and I don't think your position in the business world qualifies you for membership. Furthermore, Jack, if I were you I wouldn't be so terribly ambitious. You see—old boy—you've only been here a few years and while you've made tremendous progress, yet at the same time you're not in a position to command things. I like you immensely. You know that, don't you, and if I were you I'd wait a few years before I tried to establish myself socially. When you get a little higher up you'll be able to do a lot of things that you can't do now."

"Then you did oppose my application?" I felt like punching him on the nose.

"I did and I didn't," he continued to stall. "Forget about it; you wouldn't like the sort of people that belong to the club. Most of them are a lot of narrow-minded old fogies. Let it rest for a while. Later on I'll get you in."

He smiled knowingly and offered me his hand. I refused the outstretched hand. I was in a fighting mood and I was

disgusted with the attitude of this self-righteous Puritan.

"Why don't you be a man, come clean and confess that you opposed my application simply because I'm an ex-crook?" I said to him. "Why stall?"

He tried to interrupt me. I kept on talking.

"I'm so damn sick of associating with men like you that I've decided to quit and go back to New York where I know some real people. I know people in New York, men and women, who are so far above any of you hamfatters that a comparison would be odious. I——"

"Now, now," he threw his arms around my neck, "don't let your feelings get the best of you. Don't talk that way. If I had know that you wanted to get in the club that bad I would have fixed it for you. Come, come," he pleaded, "forget it, forget it—don't do anything rash, old boy."

The tears were streaming down my face. I was heartsick and disgusted.

"I'd rather be back in the underworld," I cried. "For seven years I have been trying to establish myself socially and every time I try, my record as a crook is hurled in my face. My wife has been slighted and scorned. I have been slighted and scorned. I'm sick of the whole God damn business and I'm through! I'm just as good as you or any member of your exclusive club. I've got just as good a head on my shoulders as you or any of your friends. I've got a damn sight more culture than you or any of your friends and if you were a real human being you would forget about what I have been and accept me for what I represent to-day."

I quit. I wrote out my resignation, setting forth why I was resigning.

CHAPTER XXVI

BREAKING OUT IN PRINT

WHEN I returned to New York and informed Eddie Smith, Silas Bent and the rest of the writing men that I had quit the automobile game they were astonished.

"What," they gasped, "you have quit a $15,000-a-year job?"

"Yes," I assured them, "I'm through with that business forever."

They tried to convince me that I had made a big mistake.

"You're a nut," Eddie denounced me, "a rip-roaring maniac."

"I'm not a nut," I argued with him. "I couldn't have remained in the game and retained my self-respect."

"But what are you going to do now?" the scribblers asked me.

"I'm going to write."

"Write?" The scribblers laughed at me. "Now we know you're a nut."

They told me that I should go right back to Detroit.

"Don't be foolish," they protested. "Think of what you're sacrificing. Go back to the automobile business and if you keep on advancing as you have done in the past seven years you'll be a rich man within the next ten or fifteen years."

"I'm through with the automobile game," I insisted. "I'm going to earn a living with my pen."

"You're crazy, man," they replied. "You'll starve to death."

I told them that I would succeed in the writing game as I had succeeded in the automobile game, whereupon they proceeded to point out that there was a tremendous difference between learning how to write and learning how to run an automobile factory.

"Writing is an arduous intellectual task," they pleaded. "It is an art which requires years of training, mental back-

ground, patience, imagination and individual instinct; where one succeeds, a thousand fail."

It was a dismal, discouraging picture that they painted. Nevertheless, I was determined to try.

"You fellows have learned," I said, "and I'll learn!"

"But we've had the benefit of an education," they went on; "we were in schools and colleges when you were in prisons and reform schools. We have had advantages that you didn't have."

They said the task was herculean and that it wouldn't have been so herculean if I had started ten years earlier.

"You're thirty-two now," they continued. "The average writer spends ten or twelve years and frequently more than that before he gets over. You'll be an old man before you get over."

They came within an ace of driving me back to the automobile business. There was one thing that filled me with a heroic resolution to write and that was what Emerson said in his chapter on Goethe in his *Representative Men.* I read this chapter to the "scribblers."

"Talent alone cannot make a writer. There must be a man behind the book; a personality which, by birth and quality, is pledged to the doctrines there set forth, and which exists to see and state things so, and not otherwise; holding things because they are things. If he cannot rightly express himself to-day, the same things subsist, and will open themselves to-morrow. There lies the burden on his mind —the burden of truth to be declared—more or less understood; and it constitutes his business and calling in the world, to see those facts through, and to make them known. What signifies that he trips and stammers; that his voice is harsh or hissing; that his method or his tropes are inadequate? That message will find imagery, articulation and melody. Though he were dumb, it would speak. If not—there be no such God's word in the man—what care we how adroit, how fluent, how brilliant he is?"

"I'll learn how to write," I declared. "Emerson says it can be done and I'll do it. I'd rather be a writer than a millionaire."

So I began. I went at the task passionately and patiently. I knew what was before me. I had a hunch that I might miss a few meals, have a few heartaches and suffer many disappointments; nevertheless I was willing to pay the price if I

could learn how to write. I would master this art of transmuting thought and feeling and sensation into speech! I would labor and sweat until I learned how to paint pictures of what I saw and knew! Other men had mastered the art of making words obedient servants and of stringing them together, so that they represented more than the sum total of their separate definitions and I was determined to do what other men had done!

I decided to write a novel around my life. I bought a typewriter and began the task. I put in three months on the first chapter, after which I took it to Eddie Smith and asked him for his opinion.

"It's terrible," he laughed. "I tell you that you had better give up this idea and go back to the automobile business."

"No," I replied, "I'll be damned if I do."

"You'll go back," he said, "when the dough runs out. Wait until the landlord, the grocer and the butcher start knocking on the door."

"I'll never go back. I'll learn how to write."

Helen agreed with Eddie and the rest of the "scribblers." She, too, pleaded with me to give up the writing game. I was obdurate.

"Nothing doing," I would kiss her and try to convince her that I would succeed; "be patient. I'll get there yet."

After six months of steady, uninterrupted plugging, during which time I hadn't written anything that I could sell, I woke up one morning broke and hungry. Helen was despondent, but I was still the optimist. I went out among the "scribblers" and borrowed five dollars. Later on I had to borrow room rent and still later on I had to hock Helen's jewelry so that I could pay the landlord.

Eventually I discarded the idea of a novel.

"It requires too much time to write a novel," I mused; "I'll try short stories so that I can get a little money together."

I wrote a short story around a crook and his girl. Eddie and other "scribblers" said it was fierce; nevertheless I sent it out to a prominent magazine. It came back within a week or two with a rejection slip. I sent it out to another magazine and it came back again with another rejection slip. I sent it to most every magazine in the United States and it came back.

Right away I concluded that those magazine editors didn't know a good yarn when they saw one. I compared my story with stories that had been published. When I did that, I was convinced beyond all doubt that my story was a masterpiece and superior in every way to the lifeless stuff that the stupid editors bought.

Still I wasn't discouraged. As a matter of fact I was more determined than ever to get on. The "scribblers" kept after me night and day, telling me to go back to the automobile business.

"You'll never make good," they argued incessantly, "for God's sake give up this idea and go to work."

"To hell with the automobile business," I would reply. "I'd rather go back to the underworld."

Poverty was staring me in the face. I had deteriorated from the fashion plate to the "shabby genteel." Silk shirts, expensive clothes, and other luxuries which I had enjoyed while I was in the automobile business were no more. I was lucky to eat. And I ate irregularly. I ducked many a meal.

Things were breaking bad. They got worse as the days rolled along, eventually culminating in our being ejected from the apartment because we couldn't pay the rent. I sent Helen home to live with her mother until "I had established myself as a writer."

"If I wait until you have established yourself as a writer," she replied, "I shall never see you again. You better give up this nonsense and go back to the automobile business."

There was great rejoicing among the Puritans when Helen went home.

"Ha, ha," they laughed, "what did we tell you? We knew that guy was a bum. We told you that he would never make good."

The Puritans had an idea that I had failed in the automobile business. They didn't know that I had quit the game of my own accord. I offered no explanations to them. Indeed, I never had a chance to offer an explanation because I never got near enough to them to talk with them. They still slammed the doors and called me "crook" and "bum" and "fourflusher."

Along about this time I thought about obtaining a job of

some sort that would pay me enough to live on. I thought it would be a good plan to get a job so that I could eat and have a place to sleep. But I didn't intend to give up the writing. Hell, no! I intended to do that at nights when I finished the day's work. I thought I would go into one of the big cafés as a waiter. I picked that occupation simply because I would have a lot of spare time. I never considered the automobile racket or any other racket that would occupy all of my time.

Here is where a great idea took possession of me. Eddie and Silas Bent had an apartment. They paid a woman to take care of that apartment.

"Why didn't I think of this before?" I mused. "I'll proposition these fellows. I'll make a business deal with them. I'll take care of their apartment, do all the chores and run all the errands if they'll give me my meals and a bed."

There was something more than the meals and the bed at the bottom of this idea. It was the desire to live with these fellows so that I could pick up a few more pointers on how to write. I went to them and propositioned them.

"Let me take care of the apartment," I said. "I'll do all the chores. I'll wash your clothes, do the cooking and run all the errands if you'll let me hang around."

The gods took me in. I was never so happy!

"Now," I said to myself, "I'll find out how these fellows write those stories."

I got along all right as a housekeeper, washerwoman and errand boy, but when it came to cooking I was an awful flivver. I couldn't cook. Eddie "high balled" me.

"Lay off that cooking stuff, kid," he admonished me. "I'll do the cooking; you're almost as good a cook as you are a writer."

He was a marvelous cook. I never ate such food. Steaks, puddings, salmon salad and every other kind of salad. And such dressings that guy prepared for the salads! The only time he and I ever fought was when I came in at night and drained the rich dressing off the salad and drank it with great relish.

I read everything that they wrote before they sent it out to the magazines and newspapers. There was an intangible and

evasive something in their work that I caught, but somehow or other I couldn't put it in mine. I struggled on, trying to master this trick of expression, trying to put words together as the rest of the writing men put them together. When I wasn't pounding away at the typewriter I was reading and dreaming of that glorious day when I would pick up a magazine and see my name over an article or a story that I had written.

A year had gone by. I hadn't earned a nickel. I had turned out a dozen or more short stories and God only knows how many articles. Finally I concluded that I would go after those terrible editors personally.

"I'll talk with them," I decided. "I'll get their point of view. I'll find out what's wrong with my stuff."

So I began to pester these autocrats who had been sending me rejection slips. There was one bird to whom I had sent everything that I had written. He was the editor of one of those magazines that told ambitious people how to attain success.

"I'll nail him first," I thought. "I'll convince him that he doesn't know a good article when he sees one."

I put in three days trying to "get to him." He was always "busy."

"Drop in to-morrow," was the message that he sent me by way of the office boy.

But I "got to him" one afternoon just as he was about to leave his office. I talked with him about my underworld history, my experiences in the automobile business and my ambitions to succeed as a writer, and then I asked him what was wrong with the stuff that I had been sending him. He told me quite frankly that it wasn't up to their standard, but that he had noted an improvement in my work.

"Don't get discouraged," he said, "you'll make good if you stick to it; writing is a tough game."

I was determined to sell him something before he got away from me.

"Don't you think that a first person story around my experiences in the automobile business would fit your magazine?" I asked him.

He didn't respond very enthusiastically.

"The idea is all right," he said, "if you can make it interesting and readable."

"I'll make it interesting and readable," I replied, "and if I don't, will you tell me what's wrong with it?"

He said he would do that thing, so I went back to the flat and pounded out an article with an inspirational twist and mailed it to him that night before I retired.

I had a hunch that I had written a good article.

"He'll buy that one, as sure as hell," I thought; "he won't send that one back with a rejection slip."

And he didn't! Good God Almighty, I went into convulsions of joy when I received a three-hundred-dollar check for that article on how a bank burglar attained success in the automobile business! It was the finest-looking check that my eyes had ever seen. I showed that check to every writing man that I knew. I carried it in my pocket for two days before I cashed it and staged a dinner and a drinking party for the "scribblers" in an Italian restaurant on Mulberry Street. That was a great night, the greatest night I had ever lived!

But the kick that I got out of that check was infinitesimal when compared with the thrill that swept over me when I saw the article in the magazine with my name at the head of the page. I was happy. I read it and reread it. I must have read it a hundred times. I read until I was google-eyed. I sent copies of the magazine to all my friends in the automobile game. I sent copies to Helen's brothers and sisters.

"Ha, ha!" I talked to myself. "I'm an author. I'm a writer. They said I couldn't do it, but I have done it. Some day I'll be a great writing man! I'll show all these fellows what I can do."

I was so confident of succeeding as a writer after I received that first check that I rented an apartment of my own. I left Silas and Eddie Smith. Helen and I went back to housekeeping.

I switched my tactics. Heretofore I had been trying to sell to the big magazines exclusively. Now I decided to play the small ones and thus write myself up to the big leaguers.

"I'll start at the bottom," I concluded, "and work myself up to the top."

Along about this time I met a publisher. A mutual friend

had told him a thing or two about my history. He was interested and expressed a desire to know me; so I went to see him. He offered me a job as a staff writer on his magazines. I thought he was crazy.

"You want me to work for you, write for your magazines?"

He said he would be glad to give me a chance.

"He must be a nut to offer me such a job!" I thought. "I wonder if he's trying to kid me?"

I nearly did a Brodie when he told me that he was serious and that he would pay me one hundred dollars a week.

"I'll start you in with a hundred," he said, "and as you improve I will increase it."

"Good God," I muttered to myself, "that's more money than some of those 'star newspaper men' are earning."

Jimmy Bell, one of the feature writers on the *Sunday Herald* wasn't getting a hundred a week. Tommy Devlin on the *Sunday World* was getting seventy-five and most of the fellows that I knew on the morning and evening papers were receiving from twenty-five to fifty and yet here was this publisher offering me a hundred.

"Well,"—my head and chest began to expand enormously, —"Jimmy and Tommy and the rest of those boys are not in my class. They're just ordinary newspaper men, while I'm a magazine writer."

It never occurred to me that Jimmy and Tommy could "write rings around me." I was drunken with success or at least with the thought of success.

I accepted the publisher's offer. He said he wanted me to write a crook serial for one of his magazines. I was not so sure that I could deliver the goods; nevertheless I put on a bold front and said:

"Very well, sir, I'll write you a knock-out."

So I began my crook serial. I wrote myself into the story. I called it "The Philanthropic Bank Burglar." I was robbing banks and building hospitals with the money that I got. I was a burglar with an ideal. Prisons were all wrong. Criminals should be treated in hospitals by psychiatrists and pathologists. I was sending all the money that I got out of the banks to a well-known pathologist. I was sending it anonymously and he was building a hospital with it. I had celebrated detectives

on my trail all through the story and just about the time that they were going to capture me, the reader read "continued in the next installment." I had learned how to leave readers "hanging in the air" gasping for breath, and I was sure that I was a great novelist when the readers began writing me letters complimenting me on the "marvelous Philanthropic Bank Burglar."

But I was not so good on endings. I killed the detective at the end of the story. One of the Editors said that wouldn't do, that I would have to change the ending.

"We must have a moral in the story," he said, "and the moral of this story should be defeat. A burglar should never succeed."

So I switched the ending. I had myself killed by the detective! Needless to say I didn't like that ending. I preferred killing the dick to being killed.

The Editors pronounced me "a marvel." I thought they were kidding me.

"I can't be a marvel," I said to them. "I've been writing only a year and there must be many things about writing that I don't know."

I really believed that I had a lot to learn, that I had a long way to go before I would become a finished writer. They assured me that I was the goods. I didn't believe them.

"If I'm the goods," I mused, "I ought to be earning more than a hundred a week."

I made up my mind that I was going to ascertain whether or not I was the goods, so I sat down and wrote an article on the underworld and mailed it over to the *Saturday Evening Post*. When the *Post* sent me a check for the article, I decided that the Editors knew what they were talking about.

"I am a marvel," I thought, "of course I'm a marvel. These Editors know a writer when they see one."

Now I was convinced that I was being underpaid. I hastened to my publisher with the check.

"Take a flash at that, Boss," I handed him the check and assumed a dignified pose.

"Fine," he said, as his face lighted up with a smile, "that's fine."

I had always harbored the idea that one should get the

dough while the getting's good, so I talked money with the Boss. I had been with him only six months. I was afraid that he might think I was a fast worker.

"I think I'm being underpaid, Boss," I said; "what do you think about it? I think you should give me a little more money."

"Well," he handed me the check, "I agree with you. I guess I can afford to pay you a little more; I'll make it a hundred and fifty a week."

Before another year had gone by I was given another substantial increase. I was rambling along at a terrific clip. Life was rich and wonderful! I was doing things that no other crook had ever done. I was doing things that many men had tried to do and failed and I was determined to do still finer things than I had ever done. I was filled with an insatiable curiosity about life and beauty, and there were times when I really thought that I was on the verge of becoming a nut.

I recall my mental processes at the Metropolitan one night when I went to hear "Thaïs." Athanael, the young monk, fascinated me. This man of God was trying to save the soul of Thaïs, the voluptuous courtesan, held me spellbound with admiration and it seemed to me that I would have made an excellent monk. In my imagination I pictured myself in the character of Athanael prowling the streets of Alexandria, denouncing the luxury and license and immorality of the ancient Greeks and leading sybaritical sinners to the feet of God. But then, I thought, that was not quite so lofty an ambition. I would rather have been the great Anatole France, who wrote the book upon which this opera was based. France was the god! He was more wonderful than the man who went over the land saving souls. France was all right until I heard Massenet's "Meditation," whereupon I dethroned the great Frenchman and worshiped Massenet. There was the beat of life in that "Meditation." The musicians, I concluded, were the masters of the world.

"If I could only die right now," I thought, "and come back to life again and develop into a musician."

I had never read anything that worked on me as music did. No woman ever gave me the thrill that Wagner, Beethoven, Debussy and Massenet gave me. Tschaikowsky's

"Pathétique" made me cry tears of blood. I cried and laughed whenever I heard it. It seemed to me that my entire life was wrapped up in it. It seemed to me that my entire life was the motif of the "Tannhäuser" overture. The writers were pikers!

CHAPTER XXVII

MAN'S GRIM JUSTICE

WHEN the "Crusader" for whom I worked started a newspaper, I did reporting. A tabloid reporter! What reminiscences I have of my experiences as a tabloid reporter! I will not touch on them here. They are another book. The story of one assignment and then I'm through with this yarn of my melodramatic career.

I was in the newspaper racket about two years when I received an assignment from the Managing Editor which staggered me.

"Two men are being executed at Sing Sing to-morrow night," he said. "Go up there and cover the executions."

I protested that I didn't care for that job and suggested that he give the assignment to somebody else. I didn't relish the idea of looking at a man being executed, whereupon he began to tell me what a hell of a good story I could write around such a scene.

"You can do such a yarn better than any of the men on the staff," he concluded.

So up to Sing Sing I went to cover the execution of Luther Boody, a young negro, and Herbert Smith, a young white man. Boody had killed two detectives while Smith had killed a storekeeper. Both men had criminal records. They were what the world calls "habitual criminals."

On my way up the river my mind took a reminiscent twist. I was wondering whether any of the old gang of keepers were still there. I had a hunch that I would meet somebody who would recognize me. If any of them recognized me I knew that I would be high balled and the paper would not get the story of the double execution. As the train rambled along, I found myself entertaining the hope that I would be recognized. I didn't want to look at two unfortunate devils being scorched to death. The thought sickened me.

Then I began to paint mental pictures of the execution chamber.

"It will probably be a dimly lighted room," I thought, "with just one small incandescent over the chair. It will be a small room with the old prison odor of disinfectants. It will have white-washed walls and stone floors."

I had seen the outside of the death house a hundred times or more while I was a convict in Sing Sing, but I had never got a peep at the inside of the joint. On more than one occasion I had seen the lights blink on the nights that men had been executed. I had sat in my cell many nights and watched the lights blink. We knew that someone had taken the jump into the Infinite when the lights blinked. Nobody slept in Sing Sing on the nights that they burned murderers.

I thought about the long days and nights that I had spent in Sing Sing. I saw myself sitting in the little vermin-ridden cell watching the lights. I saw myself in the dungeons twelve years ago and now I was on my way back to this same Sing Sing as a reporter! I think I lived through my entire underworld career that night as the rattler rambled along to Ossining.

When I arrived at the prison there were twenty or twenty-five men waiting outside the Warden's office. They were smoking cigarettes and cigars. Some of them were drinking booze out of bottles. Several of them were gorgeously jingled. They were the witnesses. The State says so many witnesses may look at an execution. Some of them were discussing the two men who were to die that night. Others were telling smutty stories while others were laughing. I was sick. My stomach was trembling. I heard one fellow say:

"Give me another shot out of that bottle. I've got to be all steamed up before I can look at one of these burning parties."

I moved through the crowd into the Warden's office. I saw an old keeper who had been at the prison while I was doing my bit. I recognized him instantly.

"I hope he recognizes me," I mumbled.

But he didn't. I went by him to the Warden's desk and presented my credentials. At ten minutes to eleven the Warden called all the witnesses and newspaper men into his office.

"There will be no talking when you gentlemen get in there," he said; "the strictest silence must prevail. Go to your seats in an orderly fashion and remain seated until the executions are over."

Then he led the way out of his office to a big gate in the corner of the prison yard. As we marched along behind the Warden I saw several members of the party stop and take a few more drinks. When we arrived at the gate, I started to turn back. One of the jingled witnesses was talking.

"I want to see that God damn boogie, Luther Boody, burned," he said. "He killed a couple of good coppers; I'd like to throw the switch on that boogie."

"Cut out that loud talking," the guard on the gate snapped. "Where in the hell do y' think you're going, to a poker party?"

I walked through the gate. I entered the human abattoir in a daze and took my seat on the front bench. I was within ten feet of the electric chair. The room was not as I had pictured it in my imagination. Instead of being dimly lighted it was glaringly bright. There was no odor of disinfectants, no stone floors or whitewashed walls. It was scrupulously clean.

The hideous-looking chair stood in the middle of the floor. Stanch-looking straps and buckles dangled carelessly from the top and the sides. The switchboard was to the left of the chair, while off to the right was the autopsy room over which there was a sign "Silence." It seemed to me that the sign was out of place, for a deathlike silence prevailed when the big keeper had locked the door through which we had just entered the abattoir. When I heard him lock the door I was possessed with a desire to get up and dash out. Cold horror clutched suffocatingly at my throat.

I was in a stupor. Presently a voice cut the ominous silence like a knife.

"Bring in Boody." The principal keeper had spoken.

An officer tiptoed over to the door which separated the execution chamber from the cells of the condemned. The man at the door turned the key in the lock noiselessly and then he pulled the door open slowly, after which another keeper tiptoed down the steps into the condemned cell house. The officer at the door closed it; he stood there peering through the

crack. He held his right hand on his hip. The rest of the keepers stood in front of the chair with their arms folded across their breasts. They, too, were watching the door intently.

Presently I heard the jingle of keys. A door was opened back there in the condemned cell house. Almost simultaneously I heard it closed with a rattle and a bang. Then I heard the sound of shuffling feet and I knew that the procession of death had started.

"They're coming," I thought.

The keeper in the execution chamber opened the door a little. He still held his right hand on his hip and he still peered through into the condemned cell house. Little by little he kept opening the door, until suddenly he pulled it wide open as a voice rang out:

"Good-by, boys." Boody's valedictory to his comrades.

"Good-by, Luther," came the throaty response.

Somebody back there screamed:

"Jesus have mercy on him."

My eyes were riveted on the door through which Boody must soon enter the chamber of death. The eyes of everybody were riveted on that door, especially the eyes of the keepers.

In came Boody with his head in the air and a smile on his chocolate-brown face. The keepers ushered him into the chair and hurriedly began to strap him into it. The smile on his face was gradually disappearing. His face was changing from a chocolate brown to a pasty gray. He had fallen into the chair with the air of a man who was dog tired. Now the smile had gone. His brows contracted and relaxed. He was licking his lips with his tongue and there was a woe-begone, far-away look in his eyes. He was making a desperate effort to die game. A minister stood to the left of the chair reciting the death service from the Gospel of St. Luke.

"To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the ways of peace," etc, etc.

A little bald-headed rat-eyed man, the official killer, was adjusting the electrode on top of Boody's head. The keepers had the other electrode tight up against the chocolate-brown skin of his leg and then, just before the executioner reached

up to get hold of the wire that was dangling from the ceiling, the wire that connected with the electrode on Boody's head, the young negro gasped: "Good-by, Doc," to Doctor Squires, the prison physician. In another second or two the official killer had connected the snakelike piece of wire with the electrode on the victim's head. The connection with the switchboard had been made! Then over the chamber of death there fell a sickening suspense.

Boody's legs were shaking. His hands, which hung carelessly over the ends of the chair, were jumping up and down like the hands of a dope fiend gone mad for drugs. Doctor Squires gave the signal to throw on the juice. The little baldheaded, rat-eyed executioner rammed in the lever with a crash. Instantaneously Boody's hands doubled up. The veins began to rise, slowly rise. I could see them rising, slowly rising, until the thought possessed me that they would burst eventually and drench the occupants of the front seats with blood. I observed the saliva pouring out of his mouth. His neck was gradually turning from a ginger-cake brown to a blood red and the jugular veins on each side of the neck were doubling into knots. The neck was slowly expanding to a monstrous, unhuman shape!

The juice hummed menacingly. Now and then a little blue-white flame flashed from under the head electrode. There was the sickening stench of scorched flesh in the abattoir!

I heaved a sigh of relief when the juice was cut off. A witness on the bench behind me began to vomit.

Two big keepers moved over to the chair and unloosened the straps around Boody's chest, after which they wiped his chest with a towel. The doctor applied the stethoscope and listened attentively. The heart was still beating. The cop-killer was not dead. They strapped him up again and gave him another shot. The body convulsed frightfully on the second shot. Up it went in the chair, up, up, up, as though with a superhuman effort he was trying to struggle out of the flame chair that had bitten into the marrow with its fiery fangs. The straps were straining under the terrific impact of the body. When the juice was cut off again, the body dropped down into the chair with a dull thud! Once more the doctor

applied the stethoscope. Then he turned and faced the witnesses and said:

"I pronounce this man dead!"

"Jesus Christ Almighty, this is fierce!" the man on my right gasped. "This is murder, cold-blooded murder!"

When the executioner removed the electrode and leather cap from Boody's head, what a sight I beheld!

The head was resting on the left shoulder as though the neck had been broken. His tongue hung out of the corner of his mouth by a thin bloody shred. He had bitten it in half!

I didn't look at the white man, Herbert Smith, when he came in to be killed. I was much too sick to look at another killing. I lowered my head and kept it lowered until I heard the Doctor say:

"I pronounce this man dead!"

As I staggered out of the abattoir, a verse out of Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol" flitted across my mind:

"For man's grim Justice goes its way,
And it will not swerve aside;
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,
It has a deadly stride;
With iron heels it slays the strong,
The monstrous parricide."

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